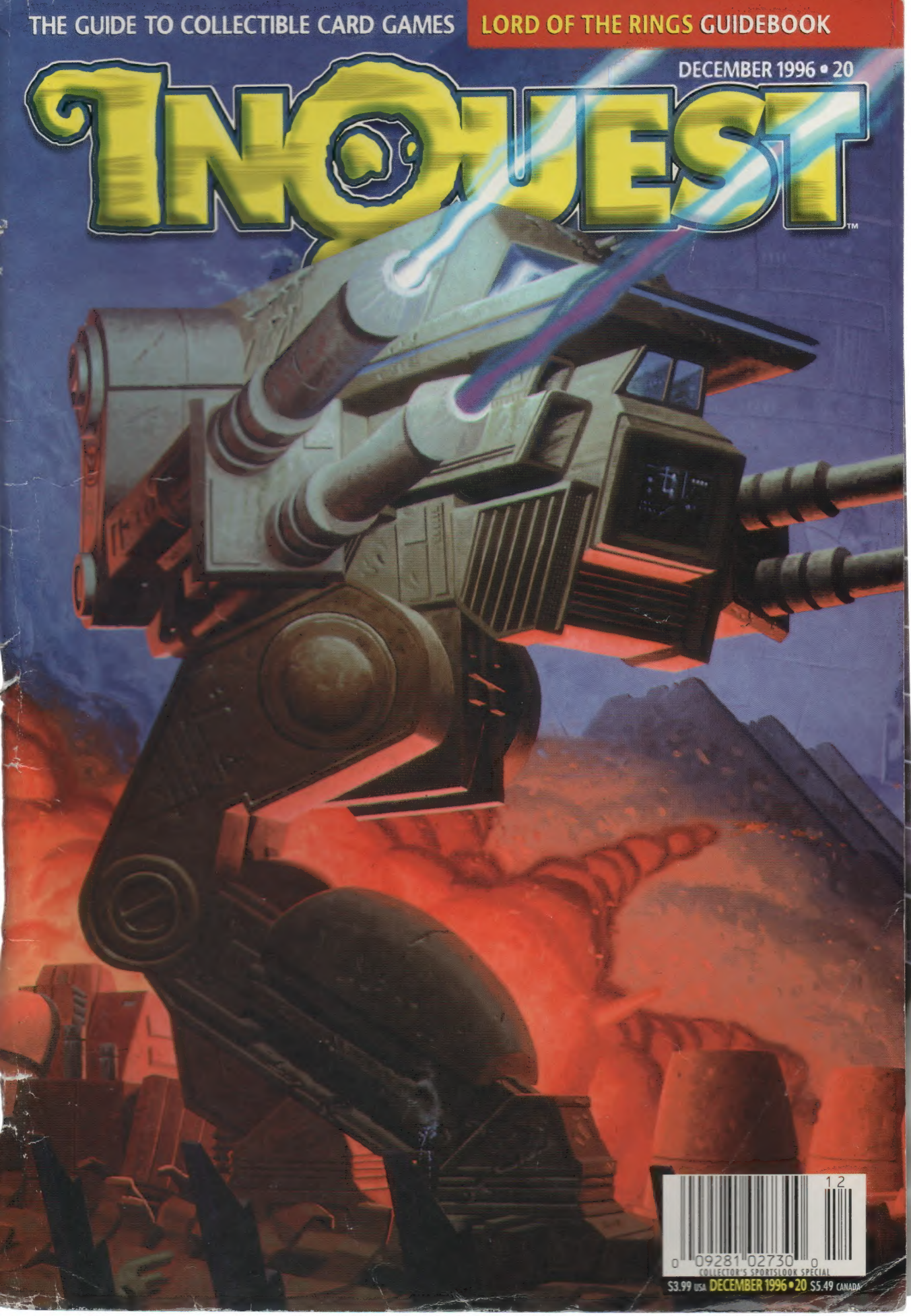
THE GUIDE TO COLLECTIBLE CARD GAMES

LORD OF THE RINGS GUIDEBOOK

DECEMBER 1996 • 20

INQUEST™



0 09281 02730 0 12
COLLECTOR'S SPORTSLOOK SPECIAL
$3.99 USA DECEMBER 1996 • 20 $5.49 CANADA

Sci-Fi Film Preview

"Independence Day": When it opened, you saw it, you loved it. "Star Wars" Trilogy Special Edition: When it opens Jan. 31, 1997, you'll see it, you'll love it.

But what to watch in the meantime? Read on.

"Space Jam" (opens Nov. 15): An evil otherworldly amusement park owner abducts the Looney Tunes. Bugs Bunny arranges for a full-court duel to determine their fate. So the baddies kidnap NBA superstars Charles Barkley, Muggsy Bogues and Patrick Ewing, and Bugs recruits Chicago Bulls star and one-man team Michael Jordan. "I'm nervous about my acting," Jordan has admitted.

"This is worlds away from Disney," animation co-director Tony Cervone said. "This isn't a moralistic fairy tale. If [Disney is] the Merchant Ivory of animation, we're more like 'Die Hard.'"

"Star Trek: First Contact" (Nov. 22): Director Jonathan (Will Riker) Frakes pits the "Next Generation" cast against the Federation's evil nemesis, the Borg. Data starts dating, the overhauled *Enterprise* debuts and the pig farmer from "Babe" (James Cromwell) joins the party. (See "'Star Trek: First Contact,'" "*IQ* News," *InQuest* #17, and "New Trek Toys," below.)

"Mars Attacks!" (Dec. 13): Tim Burton, who brought us the 1989 Batman movie, "Ed Wood" and "Edward Scissorhands," is now unleashing "Mars Attacks!" Adapted from Topps' popular trading card and comic book series, the movie promises both to honor and to skewer monster movies, SF thrillers and disaster flicks.

—Ruth Morrison

New Trek Toys

Here's a run-down of the "Star Trek: First Contact" merchandise (see "Sci-Fi Film Preview," above) appearing this November:

Action Figures: Playmates' "FC" action figures sport the new, gray-shouldered uniform. A 9-inch-tall line has Capt. Picard in 21st-century togs. Playmates threatens more Borg toys for December. **Six-inch figures: $5.99 to $7.99; 9-inchers: $14.99 to $16.99.**

Type II Phaser: This Playmates alien-fighting accessory makes noises. **$12.99 to $13.99.**

USS *Enterprise* NCC-1701-E: The Playmates version has light-up warp nacelles and impulse engines, and it makes noises from the movie. The Ertl model requires assembly but features better detail. **Playmates: $22.99 to $24.99; Ertl: $17.99.**

Blueprints: A 24-by-36-inch cutaway view from SciTechPub will keep you from getting lost on the new *Enterprise*. There's also an 11-by-17-inch cutaway of the *Phoenix*, the first warp-drive-equipped starship. SciTechPub will give away 1 million monotone *Phoenix* posters at movie theaters. ***Enterprise*: $19.95; signed-and-numbered *Enterprise*: $40; *Phoenix*: $7.95.**

Game: *Red Alert*, a strategy game from Five Rings (see "*Red Alert*: New 'Star Trek' Dice Game," "*IQ* News," *InQuest* #19), pits *Enterprise* E against the new Borg sphere ship. **Borg and Federation boxes: $14.95 each; "First Contact" boxed set: $26.95.**

Cards: Fleer/SkyBox's "FC" set has 60 regular cards plus a slew of chase cards. **Nine-card packs: $1.99.**

Comics: Marvel's doing a one-shot "First Contact" adaptation. **$5.95.**

MicroMachines: Galoob has a license for miniature "First Contact" ships, but don't expect 'em until early 1998. By then there'll probably be a new "Trek" movie anyway.

—Adam Rogers

NEWS BITES

Geez pal, you really oughta have that looked at.

• The new *Blood & Magic* computer game, out this November, coincides with a giveaway of 100,000 copies of the first book in **TSR's new** Double Diamond Triangle **fiction series**. The epic, set in one of the until-now *Forgotten Realms*, is penned by Ed Greenwood, Roger Moore and others, and consists of nine 96-page books retailing for $1.99 each.

• Decipher has moved its ***Star Wars* world championship** to Hoth—aka Denver. Thirty-eight regional qualifiers will compete, ski and perhaps flee an Imperial invasion Dec. 6-8, 1996.

Decipher is giving away **Jedi Packs**; each contains 11 premium *Star Wars* cards. To get 'em, send $1 and a self-addressed, stamped envelope to Jedi Packs, Decipher, P.O. Box 56, Norfolk, VA 23501.

• ***The X-Files*** will ship Nov. 1, according to NXT Games, which designed the overdue **CCG**. "Fox is very interested in assuring that the game looks the best it possibly can, and the approval has [taken] longer than we thought," said NXT President Duncan Macdonell. Fox, "X-Files"' corporate owner, has been checking all 354 cards against the scripts for accuracy.

Limited edition **film cels** from the **"X-Files"** TV series are now available at $24.99.

• ***Magic: The Gathering*—The Official Encyclopedia** has color pictures of, strategy for and commentary on every *Magic* card—2,000 and counting! The 224-page book will sell for $20 starting in November.

Japanese-language *Magic* is set to ship this November.

Ultra•PRO card-protection gear contains puzzle pieces that form oversized Black Lotus and Chaos Orb cards. The **contest**, with cash prizes for completed puzzles, runs through June '97.

• The long-awaited **new "Star Wars" trilogy** will soon begin production at England's Leavesden Studios, which is electronically linked to Skywalker Ranch to form a "virtual studio." The first movie, to be directed and produced by George Lucas on a $70 million budget, is scheduled for release in the summer of 1999, according to the Associated Press.

The **special edition** of "Star Wars: A New Hope" will debut Jan. 31, 1997. "The Empire Strikes Back" will follow on Feb. 21; "Return of the Jedi," March 7.

***Star Wars: Art of Ralph McQuarrie* Metal Card Set** from Metallic Impressions brings the designer's unique vision to your home. Only 12,000 20-card sets are available.

Topps is introducing a series of **3-D "Star Wars" trading cards**. The 63-card *Star Wars: A New Hope 3D* set will be sold in 3-card packs at $3 apiece starting November or December.

Vinyl dolls featuring Xizor and Dash Rendar, from the **"Star Wars: Shadows of the Empire"** novels, are now available for $18. Luke Skywalker, Ben Kenobi and Princess Leia are retailing for $35.

Milton Bradley's ***Star Wars Interactive Video Board Game*** pits you and your Rebel friends against Darth Vader, who threatens you through your VCR. Available November.

Sound Source Interactive's "*Star Wars* Trilogy Entertainment Utility for PCs contain limited edition **phone cards** through December. The utility is available for Windows 3.1 and 95 and costs $30.

True fanatics can purchase a $350 replica of Darth Vader's light saber and a $1,500, 22-inch, limited-edition X-Wing miniature.

Surprise! *Forbes* lists "Star Wars" creator **George Lucas** as the 48th-richest American, with $2 billion in assets.

• Winona Ryder is exercising and dieting to get fit to play an android in "**Alien: Resurrection**." Sigourney Weaver returns as Ripley—or perhaps a Ripley clone—in the film.

Reports say that Jodie Foster ("Silence of the Lambs") and Matthew McConaughey ("A Time to Kill") will co-star in "**Contact**." The adaptation of astronomer Carl Sagan's novel about the discovery of extraterrestrial life has begun filming in New Mexico.

"**Starship Troopers**," based on Robert Heinlein's book and budgeted at $100 million, will open July 2, 1997.

Barry Levinson ("Rain Man," "Good Morning Vietnam") will direct Dustin Hoffman in the film version of **Michael Crichton's *Sphere***.

• Science-fiction guru **Arthur C. Clarke** and writing partner Gentry Lee are reportedly developing a 1997-98 TV miniseries about the 21st century.

• TSR will release *Super Dice*, a **Marvel Comics-based collectible dice game**, in March 1997.

• Trendmasters **"Battlestar Galactica" toys** are slated for November. Starbuck, Cylon Leader, Cylon Centurion and Imperious Leader will all be available in 6-inch figures with firing weapons. They'll cost $6.99; models with sound effects will run $9.99. A Viper and a Cylon Raider ($14.99 each) will come with a miniature figure and feature sound effects and flashing lights.

• 16-year-old Valerie Kost from Lockport, Ill., defeated Pittsburgh's Kevin S. O'Brien to

NEWS BITES

Continued from page 15

win the first ***Star Trek: The Card Game* tournament**. She got a Franklin Mint "Star Trek" chess set, a complete set of *ST:TCG* cards and $1,000 in cash.

Film cels from several **"Star Trek: The Next Generation"** episodes are being marketed for $25 apiece.

Watch for ***"Star Trek: Voyager" Season Two* cards** from Fleer this fall. The set will contain 100 cards, along with special etched-foil and clear holographic "bonus cards."

Marvel Comics is unleashing a slew of **"Star Trek" comics**. In December, look for *Star Trek: Early Voyages*, featuring the *Enterprise* crew that preceded Kirk's, and *Star Trek: Mirror, Mirror*, a one-shot. Already out are *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine*; *Star Trek: Voyager*, *Star Trek: Unlimited* (half "Next Generation," half classic "Trek"), *Star Trek: Starfleet Academy* and *Star Trek/X-Men* (a one-shot).

Sound Source's **"Star Trek: Deep Space Nine" screen saver**, featuring puzzles, sounds and video, is now available.

• Trendmasters **"Mars Attacks!" toys** will hit the shelves soon. Look for several 6- to 7.6-inch figures, two giant figures, three flexible figures and two flying saucers.

In December Topps will release 72 Wide-vision **"Mars Attacks!" trading cards** (see "Sci-Fi Film Preview" on page 15 for more info on the film).

• *The Battle of Beiden Pass* has two fixed ***Legend of the Five Rings*** decks, two promo cards, two strategy guides and a rule book. This $20 set, out in November, may be the best way to learn this acclaimed collectible card game.

• The *Guardians* Two-Player Set, a November release retailing for $20, contains everything two players need to start playing.

FPG wants you to take fantasy art and stick it. That's right: This November, the company will release limited runs of **Boris Vallejo** and **Ken Kelly** stickers.

• A ***Shadowfist* players guide** is due from Daedalus in November.

Shadowfist: ***Throne War*** is set for summer 1997.

• A ***Mythos* stand-alone set**, *Dreamlands*, is due for release next January. Ed Beard Jr., Douglas Shuler and Dan Frazier will be among its illustrators.

• Look for ***Arcadia: King Ironheart's Madness*** in December.

• Chameleon Eclectic has delayed the release of its ***Babylon Project*** roleplaying game until Nov. 26.

• Choosium's new **Glorantha** miniatures, fiction and roleplaying products will begin appearing in summer 1997.

• The ***Redemption* players guide** ($20) will ship in November.

• **DC Comics'** new **science fiction** imprint, Helix, features work by Howard Chaykin (scripting Helix's *Cyberella* series), Lucius Shepard (*Vermillion*) and others. *Brainbanx*, a six-issue miniseries debuting in December, deals with replacement human organs grown inside animals.

• ***Wing Commander*** the video game is now on the air as "Wing Commander Academy" the **TV show**. Mark Hamill ("Star Wars"), Malcolm McDowell ("Star Trek Generations") and Dana Delany ("China Beach") voice the USA Network show.

• TSR's second ***Spellfire Players Guide*** (480 pages, $20), a November release, contains color pictures, card tips and rules updates.

• New White Wolf books due in November include **Nancy Collins'** *A Dozen Black Roses*, a novel set in the *Vampire* RPG universe ($21.99); the second volume of *Edgeworks*, the **Harlan Ellison** collection ($21.99); and *Pawn of Chaos: Tales of the Eternal Champion*, an anthology set in **Michael Moorcock's multiverse** with stories by Moorcock, John Shirley, Collins and others ($14.99).

HarperCollins' November books include ***Clive Barker's A-Z of Horror*** (a $29.95 encyclopedia), Clive Barker's *Forms of Heaven* (three plays), ***Realms of Tolkien*** (illustrations of Middle-earth; $27.50) and *Barlowe's Guide to Fantasy* (illustrations of famous fantasy creatures).

Starshield Sentinels, the new science-fiction novel by *Dragonlance* authors **Tracy Hickman** and **Margaret Weis**, goes on sale for $24 this November.

• Mayfair Games' $20 *Freight Train* is a renovated non-collectible card game for two to five people.

Look for the next ***Cosmic Encounter* accessory**, *Cosmic Novas*, in December.

• Heartbreaker's *Dark Eden*, the second *Mutant Chronicles* CCG (after *Doomtroopers*), has been delayed till '97.

Issue #18's "*InQuest* Profile" on Ken Meyer Jr. should have stated that the artist's marriage to Mona is his first.

Magic Pro Tour Teams Up

The Pacific Coast Legends of California and Utah topped Team Oasis of Iowa and Illinois to claim $11,000 and the first sanctioned non-national team championship on the *Magic: The Gathering* Pro Tour.

The $25,000 Team Sealed Deck tourney was held October in Atlanta. Forty-eight five-person teams competed. All players had qualified for the normal Pro Tour or had a Duelists' Convocation sealed-deck rating of 1,675 or better.

While most teams were formed well ahead of time, some picked up their last members in Atlanta, and some were built from scratch at the Pro Tour.

The competition was organized, played and scored much like the international team tournament in August (see "*Magic* World Championships," *InQuest* #18).

In Atlanta's final, Mark Chalice, Scott Johns, Mark Justice, Preston Poulter and Mario Robaina of PCL battled Team Oasis' Dave Lyon, Mike Reinking, Kevin Stelzer, Jeff Sternal and Chris Steler. Runner-up Team Oasis won $6,000; the semifinalists, Team Reservoir Dogs from Europe and Team Canada, received $4,000 each.

PCL is one of the oldest *Magic* teams around, having originated shortly after February's New York Pro Tour. It is searching for a corporate sponsor.

WotC's Mark Rosewater said that Atlanta's team event was spurred by the emergence of informal *Magic* teams, usually a group of players sponsored by the same game store. An unofficial competition at the Long Beach, Calif., Pro Tour also helped the team-play cause.

The only other official Pro Tour team event is scheduled for the 1996-97 World Championships in Seattle.

—Beth Moursund

MAGIC UPDATES

Announced: As of Jan. 1, 1997, *Fallen Empires* and *Ice Age* will no longer be legal for Type II tournament play.

New Rule: The *Mirage* rule book contains several new rules that Wizards of the Coast says will be in effect for the Fifth Edition as well. One new rule is that damage is dealt with as soon as the spell or effect causing it is resolved. Thus if your opponent casts Giant Growth on a 1/1 creature, you can Lightning Bolt the creature and kill it. (If you Bolt the creature first, however, the opponent's Giant Growth could save it.)

New Rule: Spells and effects that produce mana, which once counted as interrupts, now belong to a new category called "mana sources." Lands, moxes, Dark Rituals and so on may now be used at any time and their effects cannot be countered or interrupted.

New Rule: Mana burn is now classified as loss of life, not damage, and cannot be prevented.

New Rule: A player may now count the cards in any library at any time.

New Rule: Resolving destruction, burial and zero toughness no longer involves any damage prevention steps. Regeneration can be used when a creature is eligible to go to the graveyard.

New Rule: Instead of determining who will take the first turn, players must hold a coin flip. The winner of the flip must choose whether or not to go first. Whoever goes first skips his first draw phase.

—Beth Moursund

ELECTRONIC IQ news

VIDEO GAMES, CD-ROMS, JUNK LIKE THAT

ACCLAIM MAGIC ACTION GAME DEBUTS

Acclaim's ***Magic: The Gathering—BattleMage*** action game ($60; see "*Magic* CD-ROM Loses Programmer, Gains Rival," "*IQ* News," *InQuest* #17) ships November for Windows 95, Sony PlayStation and Sega Saturn. Players take the role of one of six planeswalkers and use creatures, artifacts and enchantments to slug it out against other wizards. This happens in real-time action combat with up to three other online players or the computer. Battles take place on 3-D terrain that players must exploit to win.

Players can build a customized deck (duel mode) or search a randomized world for spells for their deck (campaign mode). The game is based on Fourth Edition and *Mirage* cards, and has six newly playable legendary characters. Expansion packs, to be released in 1997, will include additional "cards" to keep pace with *Magic* expansions. This game's quick development time may not indicate a high-quality job, by the way...

MicroProse isn't sure when its *Magic* game (which also has duel and campaign modes) will debut, but it has two others on tap. ***Hellbender***, a 3-D sci-fi action story, has the mandatory multiplayer modem capability and voice-overs by "X-Files" star Gillian Anderson. ***Deadly Tide*** will be a cinematic action shooting game (how many of those have you seen?) in which players fight to save humanity from aliens intent on drowning the world. As in the *Wing Commander* series, various paths open up depending on how well the missions are completed.

Speaking of *Wing Commander*, Malcolm McDowell of *Wing Commander IV* will also appear in Interplay's ***Mummy: Tomb of the Pharaoh*** (November, $60). This adventure game takes the player on a hazardous journey through Egyptian tombs, where he will solve over 50 puzzles and watch almost an hour of live-action video. Just in case McDowell's smirking mug isn't enough to spark interest in the game, Interplay will simultaneously feature an online Mummy contest—check out www.interplay.com for details.

Bethesda Softworks has finally released ***The Elder Scrolls: Daggerfall*** ($60)—more than eight months late. *Daggerfall*, like *The Elder Scrolls: Arena*, is a massive, open-ended role-playing game wherein players take the role of a character in the huge world of Tamriel. Six thousand towns and 750,000 characters give this game incredible depth. *Arena* was a way of life for many computer roleplayers; Bethesda expects *Daggerfall* to be the best-selling computer game of all time. The oddest new feature in the sequel is the "Childgard," which disables potentially offensive events, letting children "safely play *Daggerfall* with the family."

Phantasmagoria 2: A Puzzle of Flesh

Lords of the Realm 2

Cybergladiators

Sierra is going to flood the market shortly. Expected sequels include ***Lords of the Realm 2*** (an overhaul of the original, with less castle-building and more everything else), ***Phantasmagoria 2: A Puzzle of Flesh*** (psychological adventure with emphasis on gore) and ***The Time Warp of Dr. Brain*** (puzzle solving). The company will also release "original" games like ***Cybergladiators***. Sierra is expanding beyond games thanks in part to a recent merger with a large retail/travel/auto/shopping service club; expect golf-, cooking- and art-oriented releases soon.

In online news, id Software is offering **QUAKEWORLD**, an Internet action gaming environment optimized for multiplayer *Quake* matches. QUAKEWORLD tracks a player's total kills, kills per minute, and cruelty to newbies. There's no cost—id is offering this service to boost gaming on the Internet. Anyone can download the QUAKEWORLD freeware from id's Web site at www.idsoftware.com.

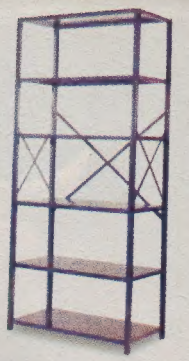
For a mere $199.99, one can own the **Sega Saturn Net Link**. With this, a Sega Saturn, a mouse and a keyboard-adapter, you can turn your television into an Internet surfboard. The product is compatible with most Internet service providers and boasts Net Link City, an online 3-D city with more than 225 sites, including the Smithsonian Institution and Disney Online.

—Rick Moscatello

Phantasmagoria 2: A Puzzle of Flesh, Lords of the Realm 2 and Cybergladiators™ Sierra

ON THE SHELVES

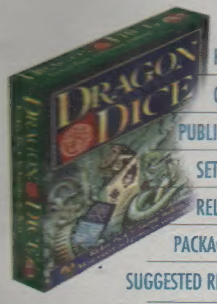
THE GUIDE TO UPCOMING GAME RELEASES



By Matt Forbeck and Teeuwynn

NAME: **Apocalypse**
GAME: *Doomtrooper*
PUBLISHER: Heartbreaker Games
SET SIZE: Over 80 cards
RELEASE: November 1996
PACKAGING: 15-card boosters
SUGGESTED RETAIL: $2.99 per booster pack

Here's the Deal: This fifth expansion set for *Doomtrooper* (which is now available in 16 different languages) features art by Simon Bisley, Paul Bonner and Paolo Parente. There will also be a new type of card—Ki powers—which all sorts of players can use and 11 special cards (over and above the regular kind) that list clarifications of the *Doomtrooper* rules.

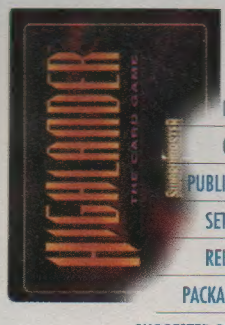


NAME: **Swamp Stalkers**
GAME: *Dragon Dice*
PUBLISHER: TSR
SET SIZE: 20 dice
RELEASE: November 1996
PACKAGING: 8-die kicker packs
SUGGESTED RETAIL: $6.95 per kicker pack

Here's the Deal: The creatures of the swamp come to the fore in this new *Dragon Dice* expansion set. Each kicker pack comes with one monster, one rare (the Abominations), two uncommon (the Half-breeds) and four common (the Purebloods) dice. Swamp Stalkers have the ability to mutate. In game terms, this means that they can sometimes replace killed foes with new Swamp Stalkers from a reserve pool. Too vicious to be warm-blooded.

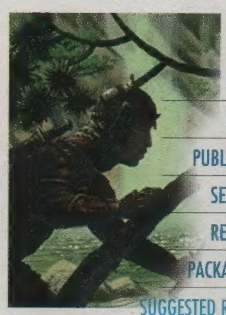
NAME: **The Empire Strikes Back: Hoth**
GAME: *Star Wars Customizable Card Game*
PUBLISHER: Decipher
SET SIZE: 162 Cards
RELEASE: November 1996
PACKAGING: 15-card expansion packs
SUGGESTED RETAIL: $3 per expansion pack

Here's the Deal: Decipher sends its fans to the home of those closed-mouthed traders, the Jawas! Yes, Tatooine won't be the same once a few AT-AT Walkers and other Imperial weapons of death descend on it. The Hoth expansion includes all new weapons, vehicles and strategies for the *Star Wars* CCG. The card set is a limited edition of 100 million cards, with a total of 162 new cards from "The Empire Strikes Back" film.



NAME: **The Watcher's Chronicle**
GAME: *Highlander*
PUBLISHER: Thunder Castle Games
SET SIZE: 100 cards
RELEASE: November 1996
PACKAGING: 15-card boosters
SUGGESTED RETAIL: $2.95 per booster pack

Here's the Deal: This expansion set introduces new cards with images from the "Highlander" television show. These include four new immortals: Annie Devlin (played by Sheena Easton), Kalas, Kern and Hugh Fitzcairn (played by Roger Daltrey). There are also new cards to use with the original eight immortals, as well as a gold foil chase set (just like in *Highlander: The Movie Edition*) of all 12 immortals.



NAME: **Anvil of Despair**
GAME: *Legend of the Five Rings*
PUBLISHER: Five Rings Publishing
SET SIZE: 150 cards
RELEASE: November 1996
PACKAGING: 60-card starters; 11-card boosters
SUGGESTED RETAIL: $7.95 per starter; $1.95 per booster

Here's the Deal: This latest expansion set comes in both starter packs and booster decks. The starters feature two armies: Toturi's army and Junzo's army. With this set, we're halfway through the *Legend of the Five Rings* backstory, just in time for some climactic events. According to the designers at Alderac Entertainment Group, "the one thing the players never counted on is going to happen." Tune in to see what's up.

NAME: **Multiverse Gift Box Set**
GAME: *Magic: The Gathering*
PUBLISHER: Wizards of the Coast
SET SIZE: 586 previously released cards and 25 *Visions* preview cards.
RELEASE: November 1996
PACKAGING: 70-card gift boxes
SUGGESTED RETAIL: $19.95 per box

Here's the Deal: This boxed set comes with six *Magic: The Gathering* boosters from across the globe: one Japanese *Chronicles*, one Italian *Alliances*, one German *Renaissance*, one French *Homelands*, and two English preview packs of *Visions* (the sequel to the *Mirage* super-set). *Visions* won't be released until February , but you can check out up to 25 of the new cards in this box. The box converts to a case for about 840 cards.

GO AHEAD, MECH MY DAY!

A PREVIEW OF BATTLETECH, WIZARDS OF THE COAST'S LATEST COLLECTIBLE CARD GAME. BY RICK SWAN.

Humongous killer robots are about to crunch their way across the world of collectible card games.

And they've taken their sweet time getting here.

"The first time I heard about doing BattleTech was in 1993," recalls Richard Garfield, research and development coordinator at Wizards of the Coast and designer of *Magic, Vampire: The Eternal Struggle* and the just-completed *BattleTech* CCG. "In '93, Wizards had *Magic* as a hot property, and we were going around acquiring licenses. One of them was *BattleTech*. So it's been technically in the works for a long time."

Garfield and company snagged the license from the FASA Corporation of Chicago, Ill., creators of the *BattleTech* board game, arguably the most popular science fiction simulation of all time. Set in the 31st Century, *BattleTech* features a war-ravaged universe where power-crazed despots and bloodthirsty mercenaries struggle for control of all humanity. The weapon of choice is the battlemech, a walking tank the size of a water tower capable of leveling mountains and barbecuing city blocks. Since its 1984 debut, *BattleTech* has sold hundreds of thousands of copies in close to a dozen languages. It's also spawned a roleplaying game (*MechWarrior*), 31 novels and over a hundred other Tech-related products. And come November, the first batch of 60-card starter decks and 15-card boosters for the *BattleTech* CCG will hit the stores—nearly three years after it was first discussed.

So why's it taken so long? No particular reason, shrugs Garfield, aside from a lot of false starts. "I worked on it on and off since '93, but none of the designs I did stayed around. The first time I began work in the current incarnation was last spring." And once he got rolling, "it went pretty smoothly." By the end of July, three months after he dug in, the basic design was essentially complete.

In the process, Garfield managed to reduce the mind-bogglingly intricate *BattleTech* universe to its essence, making the card game assessable to those who wouldn't know a mech from a meat loaf. "Familiarity with *BattleTech* isn't important. If you already know the universe, it'll probably make some of the stuff a little easier to go down. But you can play this game on the level of, 'Wow! Giant walking tanks beating up on each other!' Everybody can appreciate that."

The Game

Though Garfield came up with the concept and mechanics, the fine-tuning fell to co-worker and lead developer Charlie Catino. "At Wizards, we separate the design process into two distinct parts," says the 29-year-old Catino, a Chicago native who also served as lead developer for *Alliances,* the recent *Magic* expansion. "First, there's the actual design of the set. And then, the developer takes the set and makes sure it's fun and balanced and interesting."

BattleTech, it turns out, has more than its share of interesting cards. Catino walks us through the categories.

BattleMechs. "There are tons of different mechs," says Catino. "Small ones, large ones, ones that can do a lot of damage, ones that can take a lot of damage. Out of the approximately 350 cards in the set, roughly 150 are mechs." Each mech has an attack rating, three speed ratings—slow, medium and fast—and two defense ratings, armor and structural. (Damage points not absorbed by armor are taken as structural damage. When a mech suffers an amount of damage equal to its structural rating, it becomes scrap metal.) A mech may also be armed with special weapons, such as missiles or lasers. "Mechs are definitely the focal point of the game. It'll be hard for people to construct mech-free decks."

Resources. Mechs can't be deployed until they're paid for and built. That's where resource cards like factories and funds come in. One of the best, according to Catino, is War Funds. "People might notice a slight resemblance between War Funds and the Black Lotus from Magic," he claims. How so? He won't say. "That's just a hint."

Missions. "These are one-time events that help your mechs or hinder enemy mechs," says Catino. "There are some cool ones that allow you to do some really nasty things." An example: Topple. "This involves a maneuver where I push over my opponent's mech. When battlemechs fall, they weigh so much that they actually damage themselves." Another: Forged Mission Orders. "This allows

you to send a courier behind enemy lines and give your opponent's mech incorrect orders. So while it's defending the wrong place, you go to where you want to attack."

Commands. "They're basically played to improve your mechs. One of them is Enhancement, where you can take off some of your mech's weapons and replace them with better ones. Another we're calling Command Pilots, which brings the best pilots in the universe to your side and makes a specific mech of yours much more effective. And since this is a very espionage-filled universe, we also have Subterfuge, which allows you to find out what cards your opponent has."

As for the rules, Catino says they're a snap. "*BattleTech* is very simple. It has aspects of a lot of different trading card games. You'll say, 'This part reminds me of *Vampire: The Eternal Struggle*. This part's kind of like *Magic*.' And the new stuff is very intuitive."

Garfield agrees. "*BattleTech* has a familiar structure, in that both sides are trying to do the most damage to each other. Whoever does the most, wins. So it's pretty easy to learn."

Here's how it works. Each player, taking the role of a leader in an interstellar war, draws a hand of five cards from his 60-card deck. At the beginning of a turn, a player draws two additional cards, then completes two activity phases. In phase one, he deploys any two cards from his hand, most likely resources and unfunded, unbuilt mechs. "This game allows you to put cards into play on credit," explains Garfield. "Mechs have deployment costs. An expensive mech may cost so much that you can't pay for it all at once." To get a mech up and running, the player must continue to deploy resources. "Until you've paid for it completely, it's face down and subject to being attacked."

In phase two, the player sends his completed mechs to attack enemy mechs and resources. "They attack one at a time or in a group," says Garfield. "So I can tap a single mech of mine and say its attacking your mech. Or I can tap three of my mechs and say they're attacking a factory." If a factory or similar asset is under assault and the defender has deployed a mech to guard it, the guard can block and prevent the attack. But for the block to succeed, the guard must be moving at the same speed as the attacker or faster.

An attacking mech uses all of its weapons and enhancements—missiles, lasers, extra armor—to deal maximum damage to the target while minimizing damage to itself. If the defender has a mech involved in the skirmish, it too employs all of its offensive options to pulverize its opponent. "You can pretty much make as many attacks as you like per turn," says Garfield. "But of course, your mechs tap each time, so you're running out of them unless you use special effects cards to untap them. When you either run out of mechs to attack with or you decide you want to save all the rest of your mechs for defense, your turn's over." As the players take damage, they lose cards from their libraries. When a player runs out of cards, he's out of the game.

For Garfield, one the most interesting aspects of *BattleTech* is the use of dice. "I used them very cautiously in *Netrunner*. I'm sort of expanding my use here." In *BattleTech* combat, players roll dice to resolve missile attacks, with the result determining the amount of damage. "Or you might have a particular pilot who can do some sort of suicidal move. On a roll of 1, 2, 3 or 4, the pilot goes to your scrap heap, which is like your graveyard or your discard pile. And on a 5 or 6, he goes back in your hand, so he might come back to haunt your opponent again."

"I think it's really easy to overuse or misuse dice," says Garfield. "They have this sort of insidious tax on the game. Rolling a die doesn't seem like much, but if you're doing it constantly in every battle, it can wear you down. Here, it's not like every battle has die-rolling in it. But you'll have some in every game."

Short of using loaded dice, are there any surefire paths to victory? Probably not, says Garfield, but he offers a tip. "When building a deck, the first major decision you make is whether you want to have mostly fast little mechs—which can sprint over your opponent and get a lot of attacks in early—or have mostly big mechs." Godzilla-sized mechs sound good, but they tend to be slow and expensive. Still, Garfield leans towards the big guys. "In the end, big mechs are amazingly powerful. Just incredibly powerful."

The Art

"Inspiring." That's how Richard Garfield describes the nearly 350 pieces of original art acquired for the *BattleTech* CCG. Credit goes to Wizards of the Coast senior graphic designer Roger Coad, a 28-year-old illustrator from Mahomet, Ill., who's been part of the Wizards crew for about a year and a half. "We've tried to have a lot of fun with the *BattleTech* art," says Coad, who also helped with the art direction for *Magic*. "These are, in a sense, large toys. So it's kind of like playing army."

Coad came aboard the project early last summer. Assisted by staffer Courtney Colodner, he conceived the look of the game and supervised the legion of artists. "We're using quite a few of the *Magic* artists," says Coad. "We've also brought in a lot of new artists who've pleasantly surprised us." Among the *Magic* veterans are Randy Gallegos, Rob Alexander, Chris Rush, Pete Venters and Tom Wänerstrand. FASA staff artist Jeff Laubenstein is also pitching in, as is United Kingdom artist Dermot Power. "Dermot's been part of the UK comic industry. He's working on our logo. We're very excited about him."

Though Coad tries to stay out of his artists' way, he has definite expectations. "Everything has to relate directly to the existing *BattleTech* universe. So in providing descriptions to the artists, we have to make sure everything is very specific." The game calls

for a more realistic look than the fanciful, surreal approach taken by *Magic*. "It's a little more gritty, a little darker. One of the references I've been using for a visual style is the Judge Dredd comic book."

Coad hopes the art will evoke the feeling of a grim, militaristic future. "I'd describe it as post-apocalyptic. The art's a lot more literal than in *Magic*, as we're representing mechanical vehicles and people. We've got a lot of really great scenes of these 30-foot robots engaged in all sorts of combat, as well as images of the generals and the infantry. So we've got quite a mixture, ranging from the socio-political elements to the battlegrounds to, of course, the mechs themselves."

In addition to the cards, Coad is also supervising the production of tokens that will be included in each pack. "They're going to be pressed plastic, basically a solid color," says Coad. "Courtney designed them. They work as counters, which you use when you're building your mechs."

Despite tight deadlines, Coad's team has stayed on track. "The pieces have been turning around in about three and a half weeks," he says. "I'm very pleased with what we've received." As the pieces come in, they're sent to FASA for approval. "FASA's been very helpful. They're making sure that everything stays consistent with their universe. And I think everything's been going quite well."

Growing Pains

At FASA headquarters in Chicago, *BattleTech* line developer Bryan Nystul keeps a watchful eye over the entire project. "Wizards of the Coast is designing the game," says the 26-year-old Nystul, a former employee of Mayfair Games who came to FASA about two and a half years ago. "We're making sure that everything works for the *BattleTech* universe."

Which isn't easy. "*BattleTech* has a pretty large continuity, almost comparable to something like 'Star Trek.' It's got millions of words in print. It's huge. And Wizards doesn't really have a *BattleTech* expert. They're relying on us to keep the boat on course, so to speak. That wouldn't be a problem if we were doing it ourselves."

So why didn't FASA handle the whole thing? "There are a lot of reasons," says Nystul. "Probably the main one is that Wizards has a certain degree of marketing presence and expertise that we don't have in regard to card games. Plus, we're a very small company. We have maybe 25 or 30 people here total, and the burden of producing a card game would be pretty staggering." But so far, so good. "I'd have to say things are moving along."

It's been quite a trip. After the licensing agreement was finalized in '93—and before Garfield got seriously involved—Nystul and a cadre of FASA staffers put together a design proposal and sent it over to Wizards. "First, they were going to use it. Then they were going to combine it with another design they had. Ultimately, the whole thing sort of fizzled out. That's when they more or less said, let's get Richard to come up with something." After a series of stops and starts, Garfield settled down last spring and came up with a version he liked. "Then he came out here," recalls Nystul, "and we sat down and talked about it."

Nystul's impression? "Obviously, it hadn't gone through a whole bunch of cycles of playtesting. But it was definitely a playable design." Nystul made a few suggestions, such as having mech missiles inflict a variable number of damage points instead of a fixed amount ("to make it a little bit more like the *BattleTech* board game"). Then the game went back to Wizards, where Garfield subjected it to three months of tinkering, including up to 25 hours a week of in-house playtesting. Throughout, Nystul kept tabs on the proceedings via phone, fax and e-mail, passing judgment on every sketch and sentence, making sure every pilot's name was spelled correctly and every mech had the right number of gun barrels.

The process has taken a toll on Nystul. "We've been trying to get our own stuff done in addition to helping with the card game that Wizards is doing. It's kind of doubled our workload. But I'm still excited about being involved. I'm really looking forward to cracking open those boosters. I'm confident the game's going to be pretty cool."

Last Words

Ironically, in their younger days, neither Nystul nor Garfield

All BattleMechs ™ & © FASA Corporation except BattleTech logo & Centurion ™ & © Wizards of the Coast.

cared much for *BattleTech*. "I first ran across it around '85 or '86," says Nystul, who considers himself a minor league science fiction fan at best. "I didn't like it." But within six months, he was hooked. "The concept of giant robots blowing each other up pulled me in. But what kept me coming back was the depth of the fictional universe. There are a lot of interesting stories about a lot of interesting people."

Though Garfield's more of a sci-fi aficionado than Nystul—he cites authors Isaac Asimov and Theodore Sturgeon as among his favorites—he never got around to exploring the *BattleTech* universe. "I was interested in it," Garfield says. "But I didn't really have the opportunity to really read it through." He's since made up for lost time, getting a particular kick of out of Michael Stackpole's "Blood of Kerensky" novels.

And good news for *BattleTech* vets: Stackpole is writing some of the flavor text for the CCG. "We're bending over backwards to make sure the card game is tied to specific parts of the *BattleTech* universe," says Nystul. They've taken pains, for instance, to include the major characters. "We've got Natasha Kerensky, the Black Widow. We've got all the major leaders of the great houses. We've got the major mercenary leaders like Grayson Death Carlyle. And they all have these great color portraits. I'm guessing that people who are big *BattleTech* fans are probably going to want to collect the cards, if only for the artwork."

Now, with his work complete and the release date looming, Garfield gives the game a thumb's up. "I'm very pleased."

Ditto for Nystul. "I think the game's chance of success is pretty good. There are several science fiction card games out there, but I haven't been thrilled with any of them. I think there's a good opportunity for a strong s-f game."

So the future looks good for the *BattleTech* CCG. But how about the future itself? Do these guys think the world of tomorrow will be anything like *BattleTech*?

"Not hardly," says Nystul. "I seriously doubt that giant robots are going to be tromping around."

Garfield just laughs.

Rick Swan, InQuest letter answerer and spittoon cleaner, is also the inventor of the BattleTech *hamburger: the Big Mech.*

GARFIELD'S TOP 'TECHS

"Just like in other Richard Garfield games, there are a lot of really, really good cards," says BattleTech developer Charlie Catino. "Things that'll throw a monkey wrench into all of your plans." Asked to pick a few of his favorite monkey wrenches, Garfield came up with the following ("from my beta master," meaning they're subject to last-minute changes), described in his own words:

Soft Underbelly

This is a fun one, a card you play in battle. It rips apart a mech that's under construction. It's kind of narrow in application, because you don't always get a chance to attack a mech under construction. But if you do, and your attack isn't blocked, you can play Soft Underbelly, and the thing is shredded.

[name withheld for security purposes]

If you're willing not to name it, I'll tell you about another one I like. It's a card featuring an intelligence agent. His power allows you to go through your deck and take a subterfuge card. But you don't have to show it to your opponent, which means you can actually take whatever card you like. If your opponent challenges you, you show it to him. If it's indeed a subterfuge, he really gets hosed. But if you were cheating and it wasn't a subterfuge, then you get hosed yourself.

Kai Allard-Liao

In the BattleTech universe, he's simply the best mech pilot. In the BattleTech card game, coincidentally, he's also the best.

Daishi

This is a common mech that I like to use in my deck. It's huge. I mean, it's really, really big. There are a lot of players who like to use the little mech swarm-the-opponent strategy, but I'm much more partial to the huge mech strategy, where you get one hit in and make the other person discard 20 cards from his deck.

Caught in Hangar

This card lets you attack the other person's mech directly. The idea, of course, is that the mech is caught as it's being fixed in its hangar. And I kind of like that image.

Mislabeled Drop Box

Here's one of the goofiest cards. In the BattleTech universe, forces are deployed on a planet by these boxes that are dropped from orbit. You open them up and inside are mechs, with some assembly required perhaps. You play Mislabeled Drop Boxes on your opponent and a mech which is under construction is replaced by the next mech in the deck.

MONSTERS, MONSTERS EVERYWHERE

For centuries, the monstrous vampires of the Sabbat™ have rejected humanity and forsaken the ancient laws of the undead. Since the fifteenth century, these bestial creatures have waged a holy war of blood and shadows against their enemies, the Kindred™ of the Camarilla™.

This October, the Camarilla and the Sabbat will renew their immortal war.

The Sabbat is a stand-alone expansion for **Vampire: The Eternal Struggle**™. With over 400 cards to choose from, you can create Sabbat decks to challenge Camarilla decks or include Sabbat cards in your existing V:TES decks.

PREPARE YOURSELF. THE WAY YOU PLAY V:TES IS ABOUT TO CHANGE FOREVER.

Suggested for mature players.
Wizards of the Coast Customer Service Line (206) 624-0933

Wizards of the Coast is a registered Trademark of Wizards of the Coast. Vampire: The Eternal Struggle is a trademark of Wizards of the Coast and White Wolf, Inc. Camarilla, Sabbat, and Kindred are trademarks of White Wolf, Inc. ©1996. Artwork by John Bolton. All rights reserved.

Leader of

What's the best expansion for *Magic: The Gathering*?

The answer might surprise you...

Summon Djinn
Juzam Djinn does 1 damage to you during your upkeep.
"Expect my visit when the darkness comes. The night I think is best for hiding all." - Ouallada
When Balduvian Horde comes into play, discard a card at random from your hand or bury Balduvian Horde.
"Peace will come only when we have taken Varchild's head."
- Lorna Coldeyes, Balduvian Chieftain
Dakkon Blackblade has power and toughness each equal to the number of lands you control.
"My power is as vast as the plains; my strength is that of mountains. Each wave that crashes upon the shore thunders like blood in my veins."
-Dakkon Blackblade, Memoirs

the Pack

What's the most powerful set for *Magic: The Gathering? Arabian Nights? Legends? Homelands???* A better question is, "How do you tell?" People have long debated which expansion is the best, but nobody can seem to agree on the criteria. Some people think the best expansion is the one with the largest number of powerful cards. Others think it's the one with the fewest crappy cards. To come up with an answer, we decided to put the expansions to the ultimate test and see how they actually play.

We constructed a Type I deck for each, using mostly cards from that expansion. The only cards allowed from the basic set were: Dark Ritual, Terror, Counterspell, Tranquility, Fireball (Lava Burst for *Alliances*), Shatter, Disenchant and basic lands. Not including basic lands, each deck could have no more than six of these cards. The stand-alone expanions (*Ice Age* and *Mirage*) could not use any.

The decks then faced off against each other in best-three-out-of-five matches. After several exhausting days of dueling, every deck had played every other deck one match and the results were tallied. Here's what we came up with:

Match #	Expansion Set	Game Record	Record
1.	*Alliances*	7-1	23-14
2.	*Arabian Nights*	6-2	21-15
3.	*Legends*	5-3	21-14
4.	*Mirage*	5-3	19-17
5.	*Antiquities*	4-4	20-14
6.	*Homelands*	4-4	13-18
7.	*Ice Age*	3-5	17-19
8.	*Fallen Empires*	2-6	14-21
9.	*The Dark*	0-8	8-24

So do these standings accurately represent the overall power of each expansion? Take a look at the decks and see for yourself...

By Jeff Hannes

1st Place: *Alliances* (7-1)

The Deck: There are so many good cards in *Alliances* that it was hard to settle on a combination of colors, but red/green won out. While the Deadly Insects, Yavimaya Ants and Balduvian Hordes pack a heavy punch, the true strength of the deck comes from its flexibility. Between the Pillages, Primitive Justices and Pyrokineses, *Alliances* has the tools to counter just about any of the other decks' strategies.

The direct damage of Lava Bursts and Guerilla Tactics can help kill your opponent, but they are also very useful for clearing the way for the Insects and other bone-crushing creatures. With no artifacts or enchantments, *Alliances* left most of the other decks with several useless cards.

How it Did: All but two of *Alliances*' matches went to five games, but in every contest where *Alliances* came out on top it was clear that the better deck won. The closest battle came against *Legends*, where the deck that went first won every game. Fortunately for *Alliances*, it won the coin toss for the first game.

Oddly enough, the deck's only loss came at the hands of *Homelands*. However, when *Homelands* won, its victories were convincing. *Alliances* had a hard time dealing with Roots, and an even harder time handling an Autumn Willow with Carapace and Feast of the Unicorn. Ultimately, it was the Willow that prevented *Alliances* from going undefeated.

Set MVP: Thawing Glaciers. The mana boost the Glaciers gave *Alliances* ensured that the deck wouldn't have any problems casting key cards like the Deadly Insects.

Green
- 3 Deadly Insects
- 2 Elvish Rangers
- 1 Gorilla Chieftain
- 2 Tranquilities
- 4 Yavimaya Ants

Red
- 2 Balduvian Hordes
- 1 Gorilla Shaman
- 4 Guerilla Tactics
- 3 Lava Bursts
- 3 Pillages
- 2 Primitive Justices
- 3 Pyrokineses
- 2 Storm Shamans

Lands
- 1 Balduvian Trading Post
- 9 Forests
- 1 Heart of Yavimaya
- 15 Mountains
- 2 Thawing Glaciers

2nd Place: *Arabian Nights* (6-2)

The Deck: The defining characteristics of *Arabian Nights* are huge, underpriced creatures and kick-ass special lands, and that's exactly what this black/blue/green deck uses. With three Dark Rituals in the deck, getting a second turn Ernham or Juzam Djinn is a realistic possibility, and a Serendib Efreet can almost always pop out on the third turn.

What makes the deck especially brutal are the four Flying Men and Unstable Mutations. With a little luck, that's 10 points of damage before your opponent even knows what hit him.

The Library of Alexandria and Bazaar of Baghdad give the deck important card-drawing abilities and Desert Twisters can handle just about anything in play.

How it Did: Against most decks, the big creatures proved to be too much, but *Alliances*' Deadly Insects and *Fallen Empires*' Orders gave the beasties a hard time. The *Arabian Nights* deck also had no defense against direct damage, and this proved costly in the face of *Alliances*' Lava Bursts in what turned out to be the deciding match.

The deck almost fell to *Mirage*, but a Diamond Valley saved the day. When *Mirage* countered with a Forsaken Wastes, *Arabian Nights* was lucky enough to draw a Tranquility. Hey, better lucky than good...

Set MVP: The Serendib Efreet did most of the dirty work. Few decks could handle such a potent third-turn flyer. The Efreets laughed off Incinerates and Moats, and most of the other decks had few flyers capable of killing them.

Arabian Nights

Black
3 Dark Rituals
4 Juzam Djinns
2 Terrors

Blue
4 Flying Men
2 Old Men of the Sea
4 Serendib Efreets
4 Unstable Mutations

Green
4 Desert Twisters
2 Drops of Honey
4 Ernham Djinns
1 Tranquility

Lands
1 Bazaar of Baghdad
4 Cities of Brass
1 Diamond Valley
7 Forests
7 Islands
1 Library of Alexandria
6 Swamps

3rd Place: *Legends* (5-3)

The Deck: With no multilands available, making a deck full of Summon Legends would have been difficult at best. Instead of trying to stick to the theme of the set, we decided to abuse the more powerful cards: Mana Drain, Moat and Mirror Universe.

The *Legends* deck only has a few ways to win, and most of these revolve around Mirror Universe. Protect the Mirror with counterspells (don't cast it until you plan to use it), mana burn yourself down to a couple of life, switch with the Mirror and then finish your opponent off, usually with a Sword of the Ages.

Of course, it is also possible to just beat the heck out of your opponent with Dakkon Blackblade, but he's primarily there to be sacrificed to the Sword.

How it Did: The deck worked surprisingly well, as Moat was able to shut most of the other decks down. From there on, it was a matter of drawing the right cards and getting enough mana to protect them. On more than one occasion, the *Legends* deck would set up its defenses and then just hang out. Once it had 20 lands in play, the Sword of the Ages could serve up Dakkon for victory.

Legends was vicious against weaker decks like *The Dark* and *Fallen Empires*. However, the deck had its problems against faster decks, most notably *Alliances* and *Ice Age*. If it could get a Moat down, it had a good shot at victory, but many times the opposing deck was simply too fast.

Set MVP: No contest here. Moat was the pivotal card in the deck. The Mana Drains were great at the right time, and the Mirror Universe was often necessary to finish off the opponent, but no card helped secure the lock more than Moat.

Legends

Artifacts
1 Mirror Universe
1 Sword of the Ages

Blue
2 Azure Drakes
3 Boomerangs
3 Counterspells
4 Mana Drains
1 Recall
4 Remove Souls
2 Time Elementals

Gold
1 Dakkon Blackblade
1 Nebuchadnezzar

White
3 Disenchants
1 Greater Realm of Preservation
2 Land Taxes
3 Moats
3 Spirit Links

Lands
12 Islands
1 Karakas
8 Plains
4 Swamps

Non-flying creatures cannot attack.
The purpose of any moat is to impede attack. Some are filled with water, some with thistles. Some are filled with things best left unseen.

4th Place: *Mirage* (5-3)

The Deck: With the inclusion of Elixir of Vitality, *Mirage* gives black/red decks something they sorely needed—an effective way of gaining life. Combine this with a ton of direct damage, incredibly annoying flanking knights and some funky new rares and you've got the makings of a pretty tough deck.

The goal is simple: blow your opponent away with Incinerates, Torches, Drain Lifes and the Hammer and hope you kill him before he kills you. The flankers supply you with a steady source of damage early in the game.

How it Did: All of *Mirage*'s matches were very close, as is shown by its 19-17 game record. Most were so close that *Mirage* would often get very low in life before finally claiming victory. Still, a win is a win.

Weaker decks with little in the way of damage prevention or life-gaining had little chance against *Mirage*. *Ice Age*'s speed was good enough for two games, but it couldn't take the match. *The Dark*'s life-gaining capabilities were thwarted by Forsaken Wastes. *Homelands* fell prey to the Grinning Totem in two of its losses. Both times *Mirage* grabbed Ihsan's Shade, and there was little *Homelands* could do to stop its renegade legend.

Mirage had a tougher time against the top three decks. In the deciding game, it almost had *Arabian Nights* beat with a Forsaken Wastes, but a Tranquility and a Diamond Valley saved the day. With no way to get rid of *Legends*' Greater Realm of Preservation, *Mirage* didn't have much of a chance, and although all of the games were close, *Alliances* proved to be too much for the rookie. Pyrokinesis wiped out the flankers, clearing the way for Insects and Ants.

Set MVP: Infernal Contract. Four cards for three mana is huge, even with the stiff penalty that Infernal Contract comes with. Usually the life loss wasn't even an issue. After filling up its hand, *Mirage* was usually able to follow up with an Elixir of Vitality or a Drain Life. When the games were close, the Infernal Contract gave *Mirage* the edge it needed to ensure victory.

MIRAGE

Artifacts
2 Elixirs of Vitality
1 Grinning Totem

Black
4 Cadaverous Knights
2 Dark Banishings
4 Dark Rituals
3 Drain Lifes
2 Forsaken Wastes
4 Stupors
1 Infernal Contract

Red
1 Builder's Bane
1 Dwarven Miner
1 Hammer of Bogardan
4 Incinerates
3 Kaervek's Torches
4 Searing Spear Askari's

Lands
9 Mountains
14 Swamps

5th Place: *Antiquities* (4-4)

The Deck: There was only one question that had to be answered when designing the *Antiquities* deck: "Which color should we use to support the artifacts?" With Fireballs and Atogs at our disposal, Red was simply too good to pass up.

Antiquities boasts some of the most popular cards on the tournament scene, including Mishra's Factories, Strip Mines and the Ivory Tower. Throw in the restricted Feldon's Cane, Candelabra of Tawnos and Mishra's Workshop and you've got the makings of a pretty killer deck.

Antiquities has plenty of potent creatures (Triskelion, Tetravus and Su-Chi) and effective creature elimination (Tawnos' Coffin). The drawback is they're all expensive to cast or use. Fortunately, the *Antiquities* deck is also equipped with a full set of Urza lands. With them and a Candelabra, you can do quite a bit of damage with a Fireball.

How it Did: When the deck worked, it really worked. Few competitors could handle the mammoth Fireballs *Antiquities* could unleash. Decks without direct creature-kill (Terror and the like) had a nightmarish time dealing with the Atogs, who could chew up the pieces of a Tetravus to get +8/+8.

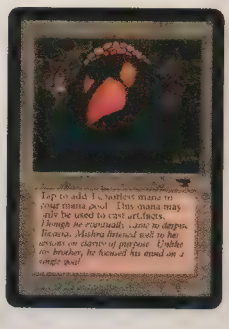
Anitiquities got off to a rocky start against *Alliances* and *Arabian Nights*. The Mishra's Workshop didn't show up often, and the deck had trouble getting an Urza set out. But, in the next four matches, the deck cruised, losing only two games total.

The torrid streak came to an end against *Legends*, which was able to use Mana Drains to turn *Antiquities* mana power to its advantage. In one game *Legends* manged to totally lock down *Antiquities* with a pair of Time Elementals. The Elementals sent two lands back to *Antiquities*' hand every turn as the artifact deck was forced to sit there and look helpless. The 80-some-odd life *Antiquities* managed to accumulate from the Ivory Tower disappeared in a hurry when a 20/20 Dakkon Blackblade hit the table.

Set MVP: Mishra's Workshop. The Workshop was *the* card that made things happen for *Antiquities*. In a mostly artifact deck, it functioned as a reusable Black Lotus, and the mana boost it gave the deck was tremendous. 4/4 Su-Chis on the first turn, Triskelions and Tetravi on the fourth turn...there was little the other decks could do against such speed.

Antiquities

Artifacts
1 Candelabra of Tawnos
1 Colossus of Sardia
1 Feldon's Cane
1 Ivory Tower
2 Jalum Tomes
1 Obelisk of Undoing
4 Su-Chis
4 Tawnos' Coffins
4 Tetravi
4 Triseklions



Red
4 Atogs
2 Detonates
4 Fireballs

Lands
4 Mishra's Factories
1 Mishra's Workshop
6 Mountains
4 Strip Mines
4 Urza's Mines
4 Urza's Power Plants
4 Urza's Towers

6th Place: *Homelands* (4-4)

The Deck: A lot of people have argued that *Homelands* is the worst expansion but, if you take a good look at the set, there are quite a few useful cards, especially in black and green.

In addition to obvious choices like Autumn Willow and Ihsan's Shade, *Homelands* also sports cheap, effective creatures like Joven's Ferrets, Spectral Bears, Hungry Mists and Leaping Lizards. Serrated Arrows is a staple in many tournament decks, and the much maligned Roots can be a very effective creature-stopper, especially in a closed environment like this one.

Then, there's the potential for combos. Carapace and Feast of the Unicorn combine for a dangerous punch that's downright deadly on an Autumn Willow. *Homelands* may have a bunch of useless cards (see Sea Troll), but it does have its share of worthwhile ones.

How it Did: After early defeats to *Arabian Nights* and *Antiquities*, *Homelands* came on strong, defeating *The Dark* and *Fallen Empires* with ease. The real surprise was its victory over *Alliances*.

Serrated Arrows countered the Yavimaya Ants, Dry Spells and a multitude of weenies held the Deadly Insects at bay, and a Carapaced Autumn Willow was nearly unstoppable. Most of the games were very close. In the third game, *Homelands* was on the verge of losing when a Terror saved the day, as a Feast of the Unicorned Willow marched by a frightened Balduvian Horde.

Homelands could never get rolling against *Legends*, and although it lost to *Antiquities*, it was able to pull out one memorable game with a Primal Order. Suffice it to say, that game ended pretty quickly.

Set MVP: Autumn Willow. While the Serrated Arrows were a key component against many decks, it was the Autumn Willow that usually made the kill. With good creature elimination to support her and no cards like Earthquake to kill her off, the Willow was a major force.

HOMELANDS

Artifacts
3 Serrated Arrows

Black
1 Baron Sengir
3 Dark Rituals
2 Dry Spells
2 Feasts of the Unicorn
2 Ihsan's Shades
2 Terrors

Green
2 Autumn Willows
2 Carapaces
3 Hungry Mists
4 Joven's Ferrets
2 Leaping Lizards
1 Primal Order
2 Roots
4 Spectral Bears
1 Tranquility

Lands
13 Forests
11 Swamps

7th Place: *Ice Age* (3-5)

The Deck: As a standalone set, *Ice Age* offers many options for deckbuilding. We decided to go with one of the set's biggest strengths—raw speed. Red and green provide plenty of direct damage, cheap creatures and big beasts to deliver the killing blow. Being able to use Stormbind is an added bonus, and no *Ice Age* deck is complete without a Zuran Orb. Since 49 of the cards in the deck can be played for three mana or less (including land), the Elkin Bottle is an effective weapon.

How it Did: When the *Ice Age* deck got a good draw it did really well. Few decks could handle the blazing speed provided by the Fyndhorn Elves. However, the deck had a tendency to stall in the late game and even three Lava Bursts weren't enough to do the trick. With no way to get rid of lands, the *Ice Age* deck fell prey to *Antiquities*' mammoth Fireballs and in a battle of speedy red/green decks, *Alliances* proved to be more resilient.

However, the speed of the deck did prove to be key when it came up against *Legends*' control/counter deck. When *Ice Age* went first, *Legends* simply didn't have a chance to set up its defenses, and *Ice Age* was able to rally off two sixth-turn kills.

Set MVP: The flexibility of the Stormbinds as an offensive or defensive tool made it the pivotal card in the set. Slow developing decks that couldn't deal with enchantments (like *The Dark*) were unable to deal with the power of the 'Bind.

ICE AGE

Artifacts
2 Elkin Bottles
3 Icy Manipulators
1 Zuran Orb

Gold
2 Stormbinds

Green
4 Fyndhorn Elves
3 Giant Growths
1 Hurricane
3 Johtull Wurms
2 Lhurgoyfs
4 Woolly Spiders

Red
4 Incinerates
1 Jokulhaups
3 Lava Bursts
2 Shatters

Lands
12 Forests
4 Karplusan Forests
7 Mountains

Stormbind
Enchantment
2: Discard a card at random from your hand to have Stormbind deal 2 damage to target creature or player.
"Once, our people could call down the storm itself to do our bidding."
—Lovisa Coldeyes,
Balduvian Chieftain

8th Place: *Fallen Empires* (2-6)

The Deck: The choice of colors was obvious. The most powerful, most often-used cards in the set are Hymn to Tourach, Order of the Ebon Hand and Order of Leitbur, so black and white formed the basis of the deck. Mindstab Thrulls gave the deck a viable discard strategy, and the Derelors provided some punch for a cheap cost.

The Hand of Justice/Icatian Town combo may not come up much, but it's highly effective when it does. The Combat Medic is a major headache for decks relying on direct damage to kill creatures and the Aeolipiles give *Fallen Empires* a little direct damage of its own.

The deck could work fast, given a good enough draw, or it could develop slowly. With enough mana, an Order can take out just about anything on the ground.

How it Did: *Fallen Empires* got off to a blazing start with victories over *Arabian Nights* and *The Dark*, but that's where the party ended. Just about every other deck had a perfect counter for the Orders—*Alliances* had Pyrokinesis, *Homelands* had Serrated Arrows, *Ice Age* had Stormbind, *Legends* had Moat, and *Mirage* had...gulp...flankers.

There were a few games where early Hymns and Mindstab Thrulls propelled *Fallen Empires* to a lead which its opponent couldn't recover from but, more often than not, the Hymns were just a nuisance.

While beating *The Dark* wasn't terribly impressive, *Fallen Empire*'s victory over *Arabian Nights* was certainly an achievement. In several "David and Goliath" battles, *Fallen Empires*' Orders were able to topple *Arabian Nights*' giants—the Erhnam and Juzam Djinns.

Set MVP: Aeolipile. Never underestimate the value of direct damage. While this under-used artifact may not be as efficient as a Lightning Bolt, the service it provides to a deck without red is invaluable. In many cases, an Aeolipile meant the difference between winning and losing.

Fallen Empires

Artifacts
4 Aeolipiles

Black
2 Derelors
4 Hymn to Tourachs
4 Mindstab Thrulls
4 Orders of the Ebon Hand
3 Terrors

White
1 Combat Medic
3 Disenchants
1 Hand of Justice
4 Icatian Javelineers
1 Icatian Town
4 Orders of Leitbur

Lands
3 Ebon Strongholds
8 Plains
3 Ruins of Trokair
11 Swamps

Artifact
1, ↗ Sacrifice Aeolipile to have it deal 2 damage to any target
"Although fragile, the Aeolipile could be quite destructive."
—Sarpadian Empires, vol. I

9th Place: *The Dark* (0-8)

The Deck: It was difficult to come up with a good *Dark* deck because, unlike the other expansions, there was no coherent theme to the playability of the cards. There weren't enough useful cards in black, blue or white to warrant using those colors, so we went with the remaining two—red and green. Red gives the deck destructive strength through Fissures, Ball Lightnings and Infernos, while green supplies a good complement of creatures. Two Fountains of Youth and just enough black for Dark Heart of the Wood give the deck strong life-gaining capability.

How it Did: Unfortunately, what may look good on paper doesn't always do so well in practice. The hapless *Dark* lost all eight of its matches, and most weren't even much of a contest. Early Ball Lightnings and Lurkers caused a ton of damage, but *The Dark* had a difficult time finishing its opponents off. At seven mana, Inferno was too expensive to be a reliable source of damage. *The Dark*'s closest chance for victory came against *Arabian Nights*, in which it drew four Fissures early in the contest. Unfortunately, by the time the deck got to five mana, it was already being overrun by a horde of Juzams and Erhnams.

While it seemed like the Blood Moons would make a big difference against *Antiquities*, they didn't. *The Dark* got a Blood Moon out in every game, but that only served to slow *Antiquities* down. It still couldn't handle the onslaught of artifacts and direct damage.

More often than not, *The Dark* got trashed, proving that it is indeed the worst *Magic* expansion to date.

Set MVP: Ball Lightning. Six damage a pop is impressive, and it did quite a job on many of the other sets. Unfortunately, three Ball Lightnings can only do 18 points of damage, and that's not enough to win the game.

The Dark™

Artifacts
1 Barl's Cage
4 Fellwar Stones
2 Fountains of Youth

Gold
2 Dark Hearts of the Wood

Green
4 Elves of Deep Shadow
3 Lurkers
3 Scavenger Folk
2 Trackers
2 Wormwood Treefolk

Red
4 Ball Lightnings
2 Blood Moons
2 Fireballs
4 Fissures
2 Infernos

Lands
8 Forests
1 Maze of Ith
13 Mountains
1 Swamp

Trample
Ball Lightning may attack on the turn during which it is summoned. Ball Lightning is buried at the end of the turn during which it is summoned.

KILLER DECKS

THE BEST IN TOURNAMENT-LEVEL *MAGIC* DECKS

Terrors of the Deep

By Jeff Hannes

The cities of Jamuraa are being infested by demons and undead, the jungles are playgrounds for vicious animals with a taste for flesh and the mountains are home to less-than-friendly goblins and dragons. So where can a battle-wearied Zhalfirin soldier go for some peace and quiet? Perhaps a weekend on the coast? Think again.

Thanks to Kaervek's machinations, no place in Jamuraa is safe, *especially* not the ocean. This black/blue *Mirage*-only deck hammers that point home with big nasties like Taniwha and Benthic Djinns. But the key to this deck is that it can be played in two ways—as a speed creature deck or as a counter/control deck.

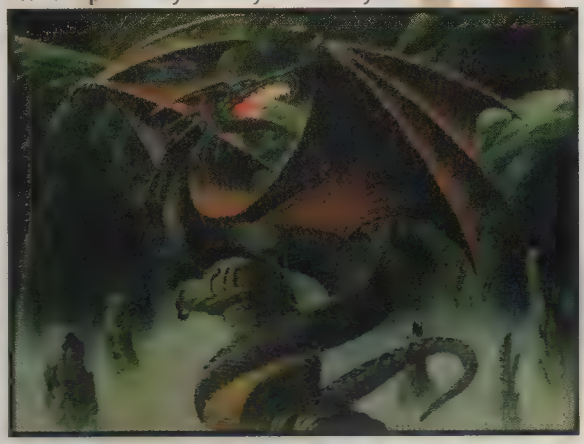
The first option is simple and straightforward. If you get a big creature and a Dark Ritual in your opening hand, you're all set. Get your beast out as fast as possible and then hammer away. For only four mana, the Benthic Djinn matches the power and toughness of a Juggernaut, and if your opponent happens to have islands, it's unblockable. The two life it costs you each turn pales in comparison to the five damage you'll be able to dole out every turn if your opponent can't deal with it.

If you don't draw a big creature right away, you'll almost surely draw a couple of smaller creatures you can plop down instead. With both flanking and regeneration, the Cadaverous Knights can wreak havoc on your opponent. If you've got no other immediate use for an opening Dark Ritual, use it slap down the Knights on the first turn. This way, by the time your opponent has the means to deal with them, you'll have enough mana available to regenerate them.

The Sewer Rats give you the ability to go after your opponent right out of the blocks, as they only cost one mana and can do up to four damage a turn. Don't be afraid to pump them up—any life you lose can be gained back by Drain Lifes.

And the Skulking Ghosts? Being able to die from a Healing Salve is certainly a drawback, but you can't beat a 2/1 flier for only two mana.

Throw in the Catacomb Dragon—a 4/4 flyer that's not too likely to get killed by a blocker—and two Bone Harvests, and you've got an effective creature strategy. Even if your opponent can handle your first wave of creatures, a mid-game Bone Harvest can practically assure you a victory.



"Raargh! This is surely hell, having to sit through 'Dragonheart' for the 18th time!"

However, anyone who's ever played a creature deck knows that it's not always reliable. Even with 14 creatures in the deck, there's still a legitimate chance that you don't draw one in your opening hand. That's why just about every other card in the deck focuses on controlling the playing field.

Sometimes even more effective than an Icy, the Amber Prisons can handle just about any problem. But more valuable than the Prisons are the Power Sinks. If you don't get a good

DEEPWATER DEATH

ARTIFACTS
2 Amber Prisons

BLACK
2 Bone Harvests
3 Cadaverous Knights
1 Catacomb Dragon
2 Dark Banishings
4 Dark Rituals
4 Drain Lifes
2 Sewer Rats
3 Skulking Ghosts
2 Withering Boons

BLUE
1 Mystical Tutor
3 Power Sinks
2 Taniwhas

GOLD
3 Benthic Djinns
2 Sealed Fates
2 Unfulfilled Desires

LANDS
8 Islands
14 Swamps

SIDEBOARD

1 Bone Harvest
1 Cerulean Wyvern
1 Cursed Totem
2 Dark Banishings
2 Mind Bends
2 Mind Harnesses
2 Reign of Terrors
2 Shimmers
2 Soul Rends

Magic: The Gathering is a registered trademark of Wizards of the Coast Inc.

"Woah! Thanks to these super-sized Q-Tips, wax ain't a problem no more."

opening creature draw, hold back and play defense with the Power Sinks. The Dark Rituals will help you counter just about anything early in the game.

With two Dark Banishings and four Drain Lifes, creatures should rarely be a problem, but just in case, you've also got two Withering Boons. These are especially valuable against black creatures, which are immune to the Banishings.

To make sure you always have options, there's a Mystical Tutor and two Unfulfilled Desires. The invaluable uses of the Tutor can range anywhere from grabbing a Dark Ritual to insure a second-turn Djinn, to snatching a Power Sink as protection for your permanents. Unless your opponent is playing a burn deck, a few life here and there shouldn't make much of a difference, so don't hesitate to use the Unfulfilled Desires if you've got a hand full of useless cards. And remember to hold on to extra land to feed the Desires.

Finally, there's the two Sealed Fates, which can help ensure your victory in the late game. Even if you only hit up your opponent for four or five cards, the ability to remove a key card could seal the outcome. If your opponent is low on cards and you've got a big creature waiting in the wings, use a Sealed Fate to do just that.

The sideboard is mostly about improving your control over the playing field. The Reigns of Terror, Soul Rends, Mind Harnesses and Dark Banishings give you extra creature control for every color. Just take out the Withering Boons and replace them with the appropriate spells.

The Cursed Totem can protect you against annoying theme decks (like a deck with four Suq'Ata Firewalkers) as well as hamper the efforts of versatile weenies like Quirion Elves. Against a heavy red deck, you'll find the extra Bone Harvest to be very helpful in maintaining a steady flow of creatures.

The Shimmers can really screw with a mono-color deck and the Cerulean Wyvern can single-handedly destroy a heavy green deck. Rounding out the sideboard are two Mind Bends which can counter color-hosers, modify the protection of your Wyvern if necessary or give your Benthic Djinns the right kind of landwalk.

It's important to note that this deck was designed for use in a *Mirage*-only environment, but that doesn't mean it can't be modified to work in standard Type II play. Protection from black creatures will tear this deck apart. If you're going to be playing against Type II decks, add Contagions or Serrated Arrows to make sure you don't get totally hosed.

Black/blue is one of the most fun color-combinations to play in *Magic*. This deck offers both strong offense and defense, and the two work pretty darn well together. Flanking, phasing, huge creatures...Terrors of the Deep offers all the flavors of *Mirage*, and it's sure to leave a bad taste in your opponent's mouth.

THEME DECKS

THE NON-KILLER DECK

Skull and Crossbones

Arrgh, me hearties! It's time to hoist the Jolly Roger and sail the clear waters of Dominaria in search of ill-gotten booty!

In addition to being a cool theme—movies like "Cutthroat Island" not withstanding—the Pirate Deck is actually pretty playable. Use techniques like islandwalk and permanent-stealing to take advantage of your opponents' weak spots, then sail on over and keelhaul the scurvy dogs. Plus, you get to annoy them by talking like Long John Silver (Mmm...hush puppies.) throughout the entire game. Arrgh!

So, raise that snifter of grog and make a toast to the life of a privateer. Yo ho ho and a bottle of...Elkin? Suleiman? Ah, whatever.

THE CAPTAIN AND HIS CREW

1 Bay Falcon ("Squawk! Pieces of Eight! Squawk!")
3 Merfolk Raiders
1 Ramirez DiPietro
1 Seasinger (The mermaid figurehead on the ship's prow.)

THE PIRATE FLEET

2 Ghost Ships
2 Kukemssa Pirates
2 Merchant Ships
2 Pirate Ships
2 Reef Pirates
1 Skeleton Ship
1 War Barge

BETWEEN THE DEVIL AND THE DEEP BLUE SEA

1 Ashnod's Altar ("Walk the plank!")
1 Astrolabe
1 Mystic Compass
2 Skull Catapults ("Fire off the starboard bow!")
1 Soul Net

SAILING, SAILING, OVER THE BOUNDING MAIN...

2 High Tides
1 Seafarer's Quay (Seriously! Banding Ramirez and the Skeleton Ship gives you a 4/6 first strike-attacking monstrosity.)
2 Sunken Cities
1 Tidal Influence
1 Urza's Chalice (A little rum makes the hard life on the ocean just a bit easier.)

THE SCOURGE OF THE SEVEN SEAS

3 Control Magics
1 Greed
2 Rays of Command
2 Steal Artifacts
2 Tortures

BEHIND THE SCENES

16 Islands
3 Phantasmal Terrains ("Island hard-a-port, Captain!")
2 Swamps
4 Underground Rivers
4 Underground Seas

BURIED TREASURES

Any of the *Mirage* Diamonds
1 Crown of the Ages
1 Gustha's Scepter
1 Jandor's Ring
1 Jeweled Amulet
1 Jeweled Bird
1 Lodestone Bauble
1 Urza's Bauble
1 Venarian Gold

—Jason Schneiderman, Scurvy Dog

KILLER DECKS II

STAR WARS

THE BEST IN TOURNAMENT-LEVEL DECKS

by Michael Mikaelian

"Don't be so proud of this technological terror you've constructed," said the Vader to the general. It's also a warning that every Dark Side deck should heed. Just because they can pump out a Star Destroyer every other turn doesn't mean the Light Side can't compete in space. If the Dark Side is careless, they could end up losing an entire fleet in no time flat. Even if you have a worthy opponent, they may still fall for this Rebel deck's little bait-and-switch tactics... or should it be baste-'em-and-waste-'em? You decide.

The key to building a killer *Star Wars: CCG* deck is getting your cards to cooperate with each other. If your deck has a lot of unique Starfighters (the ones without pilots), it should have at least enough pilots to man all of them, and then some. If you want to make an Attack Run on the Death Star, you'll want all sorts of things: Rebel Techs, Death Star: Trench, unique Starfighters, scientific calculator, lucky rabbit's foot... While the combos in this deck aren't *that* difficult, being familiar with which cards help which other cards is the key.

The driving force of this deck is combining Rebel Planners with General Dodonna and Commander Vanden Willard. If you can put all three of these cards in the Yavin 4: Massassi War Room, all your X-Wings at the Yavin 4 system will be +2 power (+3 if you control the War Room). In this case, each X-Wing could be as big as a Victory-Class Star Destroyer! Not bad for a one-man fighter.

There are many ways to take advantage of this. The best way is to deploy some ineffective-looking X-Wings to lure those two Star Destroyers over to Yavin 4. The turn after they move there, slam down Willard, Rebel Planners, Dodonna and a few more X-Wings. Even if you can't provide the full treatment at once, adding extra points to fighters already in play can tip the scales in your favor.

"I wish Lord Vader would hurry up...I gotta go!"

To make sure your souped-up fighters stay in play, deploy the "Bantha" Droid to the Yavin 4: Docking Bay. Now all your starfighters are immune to attrition less than 3. Against the big Star Destroyer decks, your opponent may never draw a high enough destiny to knock one of your ships out with attrition.

On the ground, things are a little trickier. One of your

YAVIN 4 COUNTERSTRIKE!

LOCATIONS
2 Yavin 4
2 Yavin 4: Docking Bays
1 Yavin 4: Jungle
1 Yavin 4: Massassi Ruins
1 Yavin 4: Massassi War Room (Starting Location)

CHARACTERS
2 Chewbaccas
2 Commander Vanden Willards
2 General Dodonnas
2 Han Solos
2 Luke Skywalkers
2 Obi-Wan Kenobis
2 WED-9-MI "Bantha" Droids
2 Wedge Antilles
1 Wioslea

STARSHIPS
2 Millennium Falcons
1 Red 6
10 X-Wings

INTERRUPTS
2 Don't Get Cocky
1 Jedi Presence
3 Out Of Nowheres
5 Senses
1 The Force Is Strong With This One

EFFECTS
2 Demotions
2 Rebel Planners
2 Revolutions
2 What're You Tryin' To Push On Us?

WEAPONS
2 Jedi Lightsabers
1 Obi-Wan's Lightsaber

SUBSTITUTIONS
1 Han, Luke or Obi-Wan - appropriate "Back" card
1 Chewbacca - 1 Wookie Roar
1 Wedge - 1 Biggs Darklighter

Star Wars ™ & © Lucasfilm Ltd.

"They're coming in too fast! Oh, no! I'm hit! Aaagghhh...!"

early advantages is the lack of Dark Force icons on Yavin 4. This means that you can marshal your forces in the War Room. Every time you deploy another character, it makes it harder and harder for the Dark Side to win a battle there. With characters like Obi-Wan Kenobi and the mighty Chewbacca, the party can get pretty rough.

But be careful; being on the wrong side of the War Room can be very dangerous. Once you're generating enough Force each turn to suit your needs, play a Revolution on the War Room! If you do it while the Dark Side has characters there, you'll be able to hear your opponent's eyes pop out of his sockets. Making sure the War Room stays "revolved" is key. This will put the Dark Side in the uncomfortable position of getting drained for two Force per turn unless they're able to do something about it. For some extra Force drain, throw down a Lightsaber. *Now* see if the Dark Side wants to come and attack you...

Of course, no one said it's always going to be a breeze. The Rebellion had their share of problems during the war, and if your opponent is prepared, so can you. For example, you might encounter someone who's philosophy is "prevention is the best medicine." If the Dark Side plays U-3P0, draining in the War Room just won't happen until you get rid of the deadbeat. Solution? Wioslea. Just steal his sorry tin ass. If the Dark Side tries to Alter or Boring Conversation a card you consider crucial, stop them. Alter is a prime target for What're You Tryin' To Push On Us, and then Sense it. You can also use the Push to suck Scanning Crews out of your opponent's deck.

If the tide starts to turn against you, don't give up. In a tournament, you're bound to come up against one of those players who's learned to read his cards. If you're losing, just start chucking cards that aren't absolutely necessary and wait for your opponent to spread his forces out. Then lay into the weakest group with all you've got. It may be too late for him to do something about it. Remember, a win by one point is still a win.

Michael Mikaelian won the Star Wars: CCG tournament at Gen-Con by threatening to rip his opponents' arms out of their sockets if he lost.

TOP 10 STAR WARS LIGHT SIDE CARDS

1. **Obi-Wan Kenobi:** Easily the most powerful Light Character, he's got the best numbers — 5 Power, 6 Ability, 9 Forfeit. Give him his Lightsaber and look out, evil! Obi + Chewie + Jedi Presence = big Wookie!

2. **Beggar:** This Effect lets you spend your opponent's active Force as if it were your own. The only drawback — if you spend more than 1 of their Force a turn, you lose Beggar. Oh well, a little each turn, or a lot all at once. Either way, it sucks to be the Dark Side.

3. **Luke Skywalker:** Luke's central to all the best battle destiny bonus cards — Don't Get Cocky, Skywalkers, Gift of the Mentor and The Force Is Strong With This One. Immune to attrition <3, Luke also lets you activate an extra Force when he's away from Tatooine.

4. **Kal'Falnl C'ndros:** Kal reduces your opponent's battle destiny to 0 if your draw is higher, but only when both players draw one battle destiny card. Oh yeah, the ship counts for Mara Jade for 5 & a pilot who with 2 Presence so could also help activate the Dark Side to lose Kitik Keed'kak when the two are at the same site.

5. **Mantellian Savrip:** When you lose a Force, Savrip lets you may forfeit cards from your hand for Force equal to their forfeit value — [illegible] Hey, is Obi-Wan? Why doesn't just lose the Force from my hand instead?"

6. **Out Of Nowhere:** Spend 1 Force to add one battle destiny when deploying with a starship with a maneuver of 4. Once you've successfully played Out Of Nowhere, you'll be able to keep your opponent guessing for the rest of the game.

7. **Ugnin D'ur:** for 1 Force, Draw makes a "Bridge" — you draw 1 destiny and lose opponent draws 2. The higher your destiny number, the more cards you draw. For example, use D'ur with [illegible] you'll draw cards too!

8. **Commando droid** is a Droid Interrupt: the Commando takes all his freedom cards. If you lose more than 12, and pay them in your Used Pile. For 3 Force, it can be played as a Lost Interrupt, causing your opponent to shuffle their hand and discard it randomly. This card can help the Dark Side turn a single into two.

9. **Sample V-35 Landspeeder:** Any vehicle that can move as a "scout" for a battle or Force drain against. The V-35 is the best because it comes [illegible] destiny and moves for free if you get Luke. Deploy anywhere.

10. **How Did We Get Into This Mess?:** This card allows you to put your hand in the Used pile and draw the same number of cards from your Reserve deck. Late in the game, if you only have a few Force left in your deck and many more cards in your hand, you can literally [illegible]

—Michael Mikaelian

Stumpers

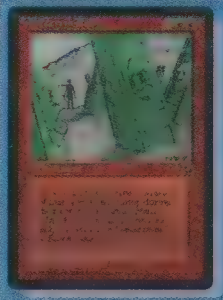
By Beth Moursund

Frequently asked questions on *Magic: The Gathering*

Q: Can I sacrifice Arenson's Aura itself to destroy an enchantment, or do I need another enchantment to sacrifice?

—Christopher Fazekas, Norristown, PA

A: Yes, you can sacrifice the Aura to itself.



Can An-Zerrin Ruins affect artifact creatures?

Q: My opponent has a Kormus Bell in play. Can I cast an An-Zerrin Ruins to use on his 1/1 Swamps?

—John Brasher, Jonesboro, GA

A: Land creatures and artifact creatures have no "creature type," so An-Zerrin Ruins can't affect them.

Q: If my opponent grabs my Juzam with a Control Magic, does it do one damage to me or *him* during our upkeep?

—Jesse Weston, Bessemer, AL

A: A Juzam damages whoever controls it during that player's upkeep.

Q: Would you be able to play an Ashnod's Transmogrant on a Guardian Beast, then have the Beast protect itself?

—Grant Lyons, Ignacio, CO

A: No, because the Beast doesn't protect artifact creatures.

Isn't this the most confusing card on the planet?

Q: You have an Enduring Renewal, a Hell's Caretaker and a Serra Angel in play. You just drew a Royal Assassin, but have to discard it due to Enduring Renewal. If you tap the Caretaker and sacrifice the Serra to put the Assassin into play, does the Serra return to your hand?

—Nelson Murphy, Warren, PA

A: Yep.

Q: My opponent lays out a Library of Leng and a Deep Spawn. Can he take the cards that Deep Spawn made him put in the graveyard and put them on top of his library instead?

—Jason Brombach, Terry, MS

A: No. Deep Spawn moves cards directly from your library to your graveyard, like a Millstone. Library of Leng only affects discards—cards put into the graveyard from your hand.

Q: If I play a Bronze Tablet and my opponent doesn't have 10 life points, can he still counter it?

—David Weinstein, Marlton, NJ

A: He can't counter it, but he can concede before the effect resolves, losing his ante but keeping his other card. Conceding is legal at any time, and is faster than an interrupt.

If you Copy Artifact a Bronze Tablet then use the Tablet, would your opponent get the Copy Artifact?

Q: What the heck would happen if you used a Copy Artifact on a Bronze Tablet, then used the Tablet? Would your opponent get the Copy Artifact?

—David Martin, Springboro, OH

A: He sure would. (Dance of Many on a Tempest Efreet works better—your opponent just gets the token.)

Q: If I have out six Plains, a Dingus Egg, a COP: Artifacts and a White Mana Battery with 12 counters and I then play Armageddon, can I activate the COP with two counters from my Battery to protect me from all the damage or do I have to activate the COP for each land that goes through the Egg?

—Bill Tonkin, Korea

A: You must activate the COP once per land.

Stumper of the Month

Q: With a Mana Flare, a Gauntlet of Might and a Naked Singularity in play, what mana can a Taiga produce?

—Gordon Haines, Oneonta, NY

A: Well, let's see. The Taiga counts as a Mountain and a Forest, so the Gauntlet will make it produce an extra red mana, no matter what anything else does. The Naked Singularity makes Mountains produce blue and Forests produce black, and then the Mana Flare adds one more of the same type. So, the Taiga can produce blue-blue-red or black-black-red.

This month's winner walks off with three different foreign edition *Magic* packs and a pack of *Legends*!

Magic: The Gathering is a registered trademark of Wizards of the Coast Inc.

Q: Would it be possible to use Ray of Command to steal my opponent's Scryb Sprite, block an attacking creature with it, quadruple-Righteousness it and then attack with one seriously pissed 29/29 Scryb Sprite?

—Aidan Cooper, Denver, CO

A: Righteousness expires at the end of the turn, and since you can only attack during your own turn, you're outta luck.

Q: I Dance of the Dead Merieke Ri Berit. Am I able to untap her with it a multiple number of times during the end of my upkeep, or can I untap her just once?

—Sandeson Gonzaga, Quezon City, Philippines

A: Just once, since you can't do any optional effects once you start the "end of upkeep" effects. (But if you cast Paralyze on her, you can untap her as many times as you have mana for.)

Q: If I play Gaze of Pain and then attack with my 9/1 El-Hajjâj and put him in a Maze of Ith, can I deal nine damage to one of my opponent's creatures and gain nine life?

—Casey Lamon, Marietta, GA

A: If your opponent doesn't block and if the creature has at least nine toughness (or you're using the *original* version of El-Hajjâj, which doesn't have the no-more-than-creature's-toughness restriction), yes. Remember, though, that your opponent can still block a Mazed creature.

Q: Can I cast Demonic Consultation and keep removing cards until the one I named comes up, then counter it with Memory Lapse and recast it to get the seventh card? Memory Lapse will keep the first six cards from being removed from the game, right?

—Mitch Bowen, Cheyenne, WY

A: Wrong. You can only cast the Memory Lapse while the Consultation is in the "being cast" stage. Once you start turning over cards, it's way too late to counter anything.

Can you tap two creatures at once with Ice Floe?

Q: If my opponent attacks and I tap one of his creatures with Ice Floe, then untap Ice Floe with Juniper Order Druid and tap another one of his creatures, what happens?

—Ben Roberts, San Antonio, TX

A: Both creatures are tapped, but the first creature will untap normally next turn, since the Ice Floe didn't remain tapped after nabbing it.

Q: I slam all the creatures on the table with a huge Pestilence blast, then bring out a Mishra's Factory and make it into an Assembly Worker to keep the Pestilence from being destroyed. My opponent uses Unsummon on the Assembly Worker to return it to my hand. The Fourth Edition rule book says, "You may play one and only one land card during your turn." Since this is the same card, can I play the Mishra's Factory again?

—Matt Graves, St. Ignatius, MT

A: Nope. When a card leaves play, it loses all "memory." If it comes back into play again, it's treated as a brand new card.

If a Krovikan Vampire kills a creature with Enduring Renewal in play who gets the slain creature?

Q: I have a Krovikan Vampire and my opponent has Enduring Renewal. I force a small 1/1 creature to attack with an Arcum's Whistle and the Vampire kills it. Who gets the creature?

—Kevin Abhold, Yakima, WA

A: Your opponent does, because the Enduring Renewal acts immediately, returning the creature to his hand. When you get to the end of the turn, the Vampire effect looks for the creature in the graveyard and can't find it, so it fizzles.

Q: My friend has a Sorceress Queen in play, and so do I. He uses his Sorceress Queen to make my Nightmare a 0/2, then uses a Transmutation to switch the Nightmare's power and toughness, making it a 2/0. I respond by using my Sorceress Queen to make it a 0/2 again. Does it survive?

—Tony Vanni, Garfield Heights, OH

A: Nice try, but you missed part of the Transmutation card: "Effects that alter power alter toughness instead, and vice versa." Using a Sorceress Queen on a Transmuted creature makes the creature 2/0, no matter what order they happen. Also, a timing note: If you respond to the Transmutation, your Queen effect resolves before the Transmutation. So even if Transmutation didn't have that extra clause, the Nightmare would still be doomed.

Contrary to popular opinion, Beth Moursund is not buried under all these "Stumpers" cards.

Have a gaming question that's driving you up the wall? Just drop us a line and we'll calm your nerves. E-mail us at InQuestMag@aol.com or write to:

STUMPERS %
InQuest
151 Wells Ave.
Congers, NY 10920

Include your full name, mailing address and phone number.

SPOTLIGHT:

HIGHLANDER
THE CARD GAME

Stumpers

Q: Can a Ranged Attack be blocked or dodged?

A: Ranged attacks can't be blocked, but they *can* be dodged (unless the card says otherwise, of course).

Q: Can I play a block just to get it out of my hand, if my opponent hasn't attacked or if it doesn't match his attack?

A: Only if it's a Guard.

Q: If I play two dodges, and each of them says, "lose one attack," how many attacks do I lose?

A: Just one. Only the very last defense that you play in a turn affects your attacks the next turn; the other ones don't count.

Q: What happens if I block a Head Shot with a normal block instead of a Power Block?

A: You take two damage, but you keep your head.

Q: If I play a Guard with a Continuity, will that Guard keep blocking Power Blows for free?

A: Yes. Continuity affects your next three defense cards. If one of them happens to be a Guard, then the effect lasts as long as that Guard remains in play.

Q: If I make an Exertion to find an attack, can I play that attack as a Power Blow?

A: Nice try, but no. An Exertion does one of three things: makes an attack a Power Blow, makes a block a Power Block or lets you "go fishing" for an attack or block. You can't combine two of them, and you can only make one Exertion per turn.

Q: The Thrust attack says it does an extra point of damage. Does this count even if it's blocked? What if it's a Power Blow?

A: Read Thrust as: "If thrust successfully scores any damage, it does an additional one damage." So a blocked Thrust or a Power Blocked Power Thrust does no damage, an unblocked Thrust or a blocked Power Blow Thrust does three damage, and an unblocked Power Blow Thrust does five damage. Whew!

Q: If I play a Shooting Blade and my opponent dodges, can I use Feint to put it back in my hand?

A: Feint can't be used on ranged attacks.

Q: One of the Pedestrian cards says that if it's still in play after five turns, whoever has the highest Ability wins. What happens if we both have the same Ability?

A: The game keeps going, and whoever does the next point of damage or heals himself first wins. If the Pedestrian is removed before either of these happens, then you're back to the normal rules.

Q: Can I play more than one Poison Gas?

A: Yes, the effects of Poison Gas (and of Scorn) are cumulative. But the effects of Avery Hoskins aren't—making one Exertion fulfills the requirements, no matter how many Averys are in play.

Special thanks to Prodipto Roy for helping with all these questions. For additional answers to *Highlander* Stumpers, check out http://www.tcgames.com/highlander/, e-mail TCGames@aol.com or call Thunder Castle Games' customer support at (816) 363-9363.

—Beth Moursund

UP YOUR SLEEVE

Surprise strategies for unappreciated *Magic* cards

Malignant Growth

by Jeremy Schichor

Drawing cards is good; this is the simple principle of *Magic* that makes an Ancestral Recall worth more than most brand-name sneakers. Nevertheless, *Mirage* lets you turn this positive into a deadly negative. Malignant Growth gives your opponent extra cards *and* a headache. But, to really put the "ow!" in Growth, you'll need a few other cards.

Underworld Dreams and the ever-nasty Black Vise immediately spring to mind. Unfortunately, the first one is out of print, and both of them are restricted. Never fear, oh faithful Vise-huggers, *Mirage* comes to the rescue: for a couple extra mana, Misers' Cage serves the same wicked purpose, and is even better in some respects (well okay, only one, but who's counting?). For a good one-shot smack in the head, throw a Storm Seeker at your opponent.

Malignant Growth
During your upkeep, put a growth counter on Malignant Growth
During target opponent's draw phase, he or she draws an additional card for each growth counter on Malignant Growth. For each card that opponent draws in this way, Malignant Growth deals 1 damage to him or her.

Drawing cards is good for you...isn't it?

Also, while Malignant Growth can hurt your opponent a lot, it does give him *a lot* of cards. Those cards, in turn, can hurt you. To keep from shooting yourself in the foot, you want to make sure your opponent doesn't have any mana available with which to cast anything. Mana Short is an old stand-by, but its effects only last one turn. *Mirage* offers a new contender to the mana-screw throne, and it's a permanent: Shimmer. In a mono-color deck, death-knells toll when Shimmer hits the table, but screwing even one color in your opponent's multi-color deck can be annoying. If you can get one Shimmer out for each of your opponent's colors, then he's *really* in trouble.

Of course, if you feel brave, there's always the Winter Orb/Icy Manipulator combo, where some clever tapping at the end of your opponent's turn lets your land untap, but not your opponent's. This combination, while the most effective, is also the most risky. Lose the Icy and you can screw yourself. Just in case, better keep some mana critters around.

Speaking of generating mana, you're going to need a healthy supply to get Malignant Growth out, and even more to keep it in play. *Mirage* offers a new member of the mana-elf family, the Quirion Elves, who are especially useful in this case as they can produce both green and blue mana. Also present in *Mirage* are the distant relatives of the Moxen, the Diamonds, which, though not nearly as powerful as their ancestors, are still a cheap, reliable source of artifact mana. Cadaverous Bloom is an excellent source of quick mana in exchange for cards from your hand, but you may want to be careful about the ratio of your hand size to your opponent's.

Bottom line? Drawing lots of cards isn't *always* a good thing, and nothing drives that point home better than Malignant Growth. So if you're sick of giving your opponent headaches with the likes of Stasis and Necropotence, try something a little more inventive...and a little more aggravating.

Malignant Growth Top Five Combos

1. Storm Seeker: On its own, Storm Seeker is decent green direct damage but, when your opponent always has a full hand, it's better than a Fireball! Just before you play it, look over your opponent's shoulder and say, "Gee... is that a storm brewing on the horizon?"

2. Underworld Dreams: Simply put, this combo's a crime. Unfortunately (or is it fortunately?) you can only use this combo if you're playing for fun or if you're in a Type I tourney. Since this combo is about as fun as torturing a gerbil, looks like this baby's only ripe for Type I play. Serves those Mox-laden cheese-heads right!

3. Howling Mine: With a Malignant Growth down, your opponent needs more cards like an Ouphe needs a War Chariot, so be sure to give them to him! A 60-card library just doesn't go as far as it used to... but business is booming at the graveyard!

4. Winter Orb: Giving your opponent a bunch of extra cards each turn is like handing him a loaded gun, so steal the bullets by cutting off his mana supply. Just be sure to keep some Elves or an Icy around... you'll need some mana to keep the upkeep going.

5. Soldevi Sentry: As long as we're at it, why not add insult to injury? If your opponent chooses to draw a card whenever you regenerate the Sentry, he'll deck himself before he knows what hit him...and if he doesn't draw, you can taunt him for the predicament he's in.

Jeremy Schichor, freelancer at large, has a headache and the urge to buy more Mirage boosters. Now what?

Magic: The Gathering is a registered trademark of Wizards of the Coast Inc.

TOP 10 MIRAGE Cards

By Jeff Hannes and Mike Searle

The most powerful cards from Magic's latest set

We gotta be dreaming—Mirage is finally here! Full of new rules like phasing and flanking, library- and graveyard-manipulation cards, dragons of every color, tons of cool multicolor cards and remakes of golden oldies, Mirage is a certifiable blast. Of course, even after hundreds of hours of play-testing, we still had a heckuva time narrowing down this ridiculously fun and potent 350-card set. Based on versatility, desirability and overall raw power, here are InQuest's top 10 Mirage cards.

1. Unfulfilled Desires

The best card in *Mirage* gives you the unbelievably efficient ability to draw a card for one life, one mana and the discard of one card from your hand. It's permanent, fairly easy to cast, requires no maintenance and allows you to rearrange your hand at any time to suit the circumstances. Facing an angry Crash of Rhinos? Surf your library for a Dark Banishing. Late in the game, replace those useless lands in hand with cards your deck can motivate with. Talk about a card advantage!

Enchantment
1, Pay 1 life: Draw a card, then choose and discard a card.
"Like Day from Night, I'll live my life apart from you, just glimpsing you across the sky, because you cannot change, my dear, and nor can I."
—"Love Song of Night and Day"
Illus. D. Alexander Gregory

2. Grinning Totem

Why is this guy smiling? Maybe it's because he knows he's about to totally screw your opponent over with one of his own cards. That's right, while the Jester's Cap just plays games with your opponent's library, the Grinning Totem gets right down to business. With a City of Brass or Fellwar Stone, you can play just about any of your opponent's cards. Need a Zuran Orb? Grab your opponent's. Want a Balance? Go get it! Crave a Time Walk? You can daydream about drawing one—or take your opponent's for yourself.

Artifact
2, Sacrifice Grinning Totem: Search target opponent's library for any card and put it face up in front of you. That player shuffles his or her library afterwards. You may play the card as though it were in your hand. If you do not play the card by the beginning of your next upkeep, put it into its owner's graveyard.
Illus. Donato Giancola

3. Mystical Tutor

It's not a Demonic Tutor, but it's the best of the new tutor spells in *Mirage*. Mystical Tutor allows you to search your library for a spell or mana source (okay, enchantments get the shaft, but still...) and then put it on top of your library to draw the following turn. Of course, Mystical Tutor's an instant, so it's a great setup card. Need that Balance to get out of a jam? Boom—it's there. Low on mana early in the game? Dark Ritual, here we come. Want some defense? Fish for that Counterspell. Lacking offense? Fireball ho!

Search your library for an instant, interrupt, mana source, or sorcery card and reveal that card to all players. Shuffle your library and put the revealed card back on top of it.
"To the tutors, a 'poem of sand' was of little account, a 'poem of ivory,' priceless."
Afari, Tales

4. Bone Harvest

Reinforcements...that was a pretty cool card. But apparently some of the *Mirage* designers didn't think it was good enough. So they gave it a paint job and better mileage, then inflated the market price to keep it "balanced." The result: a kick-ass card of the color Reinforcements really should have been in the first place. The cantrip of all cantrips, Bone Harvest is actually useful, even if the extra card only replenishes your creature supply that much faster. It's pretty simple: If you're playing with creatures, there's no reason not to use this card.

Instant
Put any number of target creature cards from your graveyard on top of your library.
Draw a card at the beginning of the next turn's upkeep.
"Only fools believe they will face my armies but once." Kaervek
Illus. Greg Simanson

5. Celestial Dawn

We knew white was the color of purity, but this is ridiculous. With Celestial Dawn in play, everything in your deck gets whitewashed—lands become plains, all cards turn white, all mana symbols transform into white mana symbols. Which means that you can now cast Drain Life, Counterspell, Lava Burst, Regrowth—any spell you want!—with white mana. Once Celestial Dawn is out, you'll never run into mana problems with a multicolored deck. Just watch out for protection from white...or Anarchy.

All nonland cards you own that are not in play are white. All nonland permanents you control are white. All lands you control are plains. All colored mana symbols in all costs on all of these cards and permanents are ✱.

6. Sealed Fate

Yet another blue/black library manipulation tool that can seal your opponent's fate. Get enough mana and you'll scramble your opponent's library worse than any schizophrenic bricklayer ever could. The trick is to slow your opponent down long enough to get an insurmountable lead or to fire Sealed Fate at a crucial time late in the game and bury the good cards in his library long enough to overwhelm him with what you have in play. Safety tip: Off Soldiers of Fortune as soon as they hit the table.

Look at the top X cards of target opponent's library. Remove one of those cards from the game and put the rest back on top of that player's library in any order.
It's good to know more about your enemy's fate than your enemy does.

7. Amber Prison

"So long Icy—hello Amber Prison!" That's what people will say when *Ice Age* is rotated out of the Type II environment. While its activation cost is a little steeper, the Prison does everything an Icy Manipulator can do and then some. An Icy is useless against, say, a Helm of Obedience or a Prodigal Sorcerer. But with the Prison you can shut down just about any permanent, well, permanently. The Prison may play second fiddle to the Icy for now, but when its *Ice Age* counterpart leaves the scene, people are gonna stock up on tree sap.

Artifact
You may choose not to untap Amber Prison during your untap phase.
{T}: Tap target artifact, creature, or land. As long as Amber Prison remains tapped, that permanent does not untap during its controller's untap phase.
Illus. Donato Giancola

8. Taniwha

Blue is full of enormous yet mostly undesirable creatures. Island Fish Jasconius, anyone? Elder Spawn, perhaps? Marjhan? Finally, *Mirage* reels in a winner. We're talking about Taniwha, the legendary 7/7 trampler costing only five mana. Forget about Taniwha's land-phasing drawback: If you Dark Ritual out a 7/7 creature on the third turn, you're not going to be needing many lands. And the combos! While Taniwha's on vacation, how about a Wrath of God? Got some artifact mana? Try an Armageddon while the serpent rips your opponent apart. Geez.

Phasing, trample
At the beginning of your upkeep, all lands you control phase out.
"Taniwha rolls in its sleep, and the land is awash with the waves."
—Poetics of Hanan

9. Natural Balance

Why is it that the cards with the word "balance" in their titles seem to be among the most unbalanced in the game? Along comes Natural Balance, a seemingly harmless little card that evens both players out at five lands apiece. But life isn't that simple, and neither is *Magic*. Take a card like Zuran Orb and combine it with Natural Balance. How about using Natural Balance with land destruction and an Ankh of Mishra? The potential for abuse with this card is so high we couldn't leave it off our top 10.

Natural Bal
Each player controlling six or more lands sacrifices enough lands to reduce his or her land total to five.
Each player controlling four or fewer lands may search his or her library for enough basic land to bring his or her land total to five and put those lands into play. Those players shuffle their libraries afterward.

10. Infernal Contract

Infernal Contract = lots of cards for life. How much life depends on what you're willing to spend and when you want to play the Contract. You probably don't want to play it when you're at 20 life, but late in the game it's a killer—sure, we'll spend four life to gain four cards. With *Mirage*'s version of Necropotence, you reap the short-term benefits without the long-term drawback. Infernal Contract is yet another spell that gives you a huge card advantage with little effort.

Honorable Mention: Illicit Auction

"Is that another elephant card for our Elephant Graveyard deck?" Uh, not exactly...try "the most fun card in the set." Illicit Auction, disturbing picture and all, is one of those theme cards that's a hoot to play. For two red and three other mana, target a creature and begin a bidding war—with life!—to see who gains control of the best creature in play. The only ones who won't be happy after this high-stakes round robin will be the poor enslaved critter being bandied about and its eventual life-beaten owner.

Worst Card: Teferi's Isle

In a set where all of the non-basic lands blow, it's fitting that the *InQuest* crown for the worst *Mirage* card goes to Teferi's Isle. The positives? You can tap it for two blue mana. The drawbacks? It comes into play tapped, it phases out every other turn and it's legendary, so you can only have one in play at a time. Teamed with the aptly named "Bad" River and the rest of its crappy cohorts, Teferi's Isle makes people wish they had gotten a basic land in the rare or uncommon slot instead of one of *Mirage*'s "special" lands.

Phasing
Teferi's Isle comes into play tapped.
: Add to your mana pool.
The three wizards knew only that this isle held a great mystery—and that patience alone would solve it.

Ranking the Colors

1. Black

Bone Harvest, Infernal Contract, Unfulfilled Desires, Sealed Fate...you need only take a look at our top 10 to see that somebody at WotC thought black needed a boost. Black in *Mirage* boasts a host of big creatures that don't hurt their controller (imagine that!), including Catacomb Dragon, Purraj of Urborg and Spirit of the Night. Tournament decks everywhere will eagerly receive the gifts of Stupor and Choking Sands, and the ultracool world enchantments Tombstone Stairwell and Forsaken Wastes should form the basis of some neat theme decks. Overall, black got the goods in this set.

2. Blue

Not far behind black in quality is blue, which also has four cards in the top 10 (including the two golds it shares with black). Throw in *another* counterspell (Dissipate), a form of land destruction (Political Trickery) and a hefty flyer (Mist Dragon) and you've got some great stuff. As an added bonus, Mind Bend blends Sleight of Mind and Magical Hack together, and Prismatic Lace ties up the laces in a nice little package.

3. White

By itself, Celestial Dawn does some big things for white. However, as if that weren't enough, there's also Illumination (another form of Disenchant), Mangara's Blessing (which thwarts hand destruction), Null Chamber (this puts the kibosh on certain decks), Sacred Mesa (weenie horde helper) and a host of other useful spells. White, previously somewhat lacking in the flier department, got a tremendous boost with a slew of Griffins. Overall, there are a lot of solid white cards and very few sucky ones.

4. Green

As always, green got its share of cool creatures. Foratog, Femeref Archers, Jolrael's Centaur, Mtenda Lion...all interesting new critters, plenty of which should find their way into tournament decks. However, other than Natural Balance, there's nothing for other colors to turn green with envy about. Unyaro Bee Sting seems cool—until you compare it to *Fallen Empires*' Aeolipile. Preferred Selection is a great companion to Sylvan Library. Being fourth best in *Mirage* isn't a bad thing—there are a lot of good cards in this set.

5. Red

Strangely absent from the top 10 list is red. After a huge boom in *Alliances*, WotC kept red's power level stable. There are some really cool red cards in *Mirage*, including Hammer of Bogardan, Volcanic Geyser and Crimson Hellkite, but nothing to get too excited about. Too many of the red cards are slightly adjusted versions of older cards.

The Other Stuff

After the *Ice Age* debacle, we're please to find that there are very few crappy artifacts and gold cards. There are lots of funky new artifacts and the opposed-color gold cards offer a refreshing and exciting change. We wish we could say the same for the non-basic lands, but let's face it: They all suck. We can only hope that *Visions* will produce some better lands.

CONTEST

All by ourselves, *InQuest* Presents:

The "*Magic* Around the World" CONTEST

It's a small world after all, and we're here to prove it. You may think all those funky non-English *Magic: The Gathering* cards are hard to find, but if your mastery of language is good enough, you could get yourself a sackful of those elusive cards with pretty pictures and words you probably can't read.

HOW DO I DO THAT?

All you have to do is speak the very foreign language of InQuestese. In our slightly mixed-up world, every time you see the letter "T," it's actually the letter "A." And every occurence of the letter "F" is really the letter "M." Using these clues, find the English translation of the following quote (and tell us its significance) and you could win this swell ...

Verzaubere Kreatur
Lege jedesmal, wenn sie getappt wird, eine -0/-2 Spielmarke auf die verzauberte Kreatur. Diese Marken bleiben auch bestehen, wenn die Geisterfessel entfernt wird.

GRAND PRIZE (ONE WINNER):

One lucky reader will receive a veritable smorgasbord of bizarre and exotic *Magic* cards: one box each of Spanish *Alliances*, Italian *The Dark*, German *Homelands*, Japanese *Chronicles* and French *Renaissance*. And that's cool in any language.

READY? HERE YOU GO. OUR INQUESTESE QUOTE IS:

"Ah ah ah! Fbwzxml! Rhn mabgd rhn vtg lmtgw bg fr ptr?"

This month's contest is sponsored by us, hot dammit, and we think we're real nice for spending money like this.

Fill this sucker out, put it an envelope and send it to:

Magic Around the World

C O N T E S T

c/o Wizard Press, P.O. Box 118, Congers, NY 10920-0118

Deadline is **December 30, 1996**

MAGIC AROUND THE WORLD

Name: _____

Age: _____

Address: _____

City: _____

State: _____

ZIP: _____

Phone: ( ) _____

Translation & its significance: _____

Linguistic Legalese

No purchase necessary. Contest is open to anyone except employees of Wizard Press and their immediate families or anyone who speaks that friggin' stupid "Esperanto" language. Print your name, date of birth, address, city, state, zip, telephone number with area code and answer on the official entry form or a 3-by-5 inch index card. Enter as many times as you like. Mail each entry separately to: *Magic* Around the World Contest, c/o Wizard Press, P.O. Box 118, Congers, NY 10920-0118. No mechanical reproductions of completed forms are accepted but you can photocopy the entry form before filling it out if you don't want to mess up your magazine. All entries become property of Wizard Press and none will be returned. All taxes (federal, state and local, if any) will be the responsibility of the prize winner. No cash equivalent or substitute prize will be offered. Prize is awarded in the name of contest winner and is not transferable. Offer void where prohibited, regulated or restricted by law in a manner inconsistent with the purposes and rules hereof. In addition to sackfuls of *Magic* cards, we also recommend that you buy White Castles by the sackful. We do. All entries must be received at contest headquarters by December 30, 1996. Wizard Press is not responsible for lost, late, misdirected or mutilated entries. Odds of winning will be determined by the number of valid entries received prior to the closing date of the contest. Prize winners will be selected by random drawing among all properly completed entries by Wizard Press. Drawing will take place on January 15, 1997.

For a list of winners, available after January 15, 1997, send a self-addressed stamped envelope to: *Magic* Around the World Winners, c/o Wizard Press, P.O. Box 118, Congers, NY 10920-0118.

Pro Tour IV

A German champion reigns at the *Mirage* debut tournament

By Beth Moursund

The 1996/97 Pro Tour season began with a bang. September's Atlanta Pro Tour featured not only the biggest prize pot yet ($150,000 cash and $30,000 in scholarships), but also the first glimpse of the new *Mirage* stand-alone expansion.

The action started Friday morning. Each player received a *Mirage* starter deck and two boosters (plus five basic lands of their choice), and had one scant hour to figure out what all the cards did, build a deck and fill out a deck record sheet. Then, the tournament began: nine grueling rounds of Swiss play for the 193 players in the Masters division, and six rounds for the 59 in the Juniors division. The top eight players in each division advanced to Sunday's finals.

Winner Frank Adler

And advance they did. Sunday morning brought the top eight Masters and Juniors to the finals as they reluctantly abandoned the decks they'd used to claw their way to the top on Friday. Under the close scrutiny of judges, the players opened new packages of cards and built entirely new decks. They were then paired off for single-elimination play, seeded by their rankings from Friday. As was usual for the Pro Tour, these matches were displayed on large-screen TVs with running commentary by expert players. The quarterfinals, like the earlier matches, were best two-of-three, but the last two rounds would be best three-of-five.

Faced with the prospect of creating and playing brand-new decks for the finals, many of the players had to think quickly on their feet. Finalist Darwin Mess-Kastle had several options for primary colors in his deck: "I felt I should play green because I had five green creatures I liked. The thing is, I could make up for some lack of red direct-damage because I had a green direct-damage spell. It was more important to have quality creatures than direct damage, partially because I had black removal as well."

"I like the option of sideboarding in a five-game match," continues Mess-Kastle. "I like to change colors and confuse my opponent or have him have useless cards in his deck. Like one of the things I really liked about my opponent this time [Aaron Muranaka, semifinal match] is he had a spell that got rid of all green creatures. So, by taking my green out, one of the most powerful spells in his deck was now a useless card, which I definitely felt was a good thing."

After splitting the first two games of his semifinal match 1-1, Mess-Kastle took out all his green cards, his forests and the Ravenous Vampire, and sideboarded in his red direct damage: two Chaos Charms and two Incinerates. He also added a Searing Spear Askari, two golems and two Urborg Panthers to increase his creature count. During deck building, Mess-Kas-

the top decks

Frank Adler
Masters Champion ($26,000)
Age 32
Köln, Germany
Preliminaries: Red/black/blue
Key Cards: Sealed Fate, Kaervek's Purge, Harmattan Efreet, Dirtwater Wraith.
Finals: Red/green/blue
Key Cards: Savage Twister, Kaervek's Torch, Reckless Embermage.

Darwin Mess-Kastle
Masters Finalist ($16,000)
Age 24
Newton Upper Falls, MA
Preliminaries: Red/black/blue
Key Cards: Sandbar Crocodile, Flare, Thirst, Benthic Djinn
Finals: Black/green/blue (swap green for red or white mid-match)
Key Cards: Enfeeblement, Dirtwater Wraith, Sandbar Crocodile

John Yoo
Masters Semifinalist ($9,000)
Age 22
Los Angeles, CA
Preliminaries: Red/green/white
Key Cards: Unseen Walker, Basalt Golem, seven flyers
Finals: Red/black/green
Key Cards: Kaervek's Torch, Dwarven Nomad, Fetid Horror, Sabertooth Cobra

Aaron Muranaka
Masters Semifinalist ($9,000)
Age 19
Layton, UT
Preliminaries: Red/green/black
Key Cards: Kaervek's Torch, Volcanic Geyser, Crash of Rhinos
Finals: Red/black/blue
Key Cards: Volcanic Geyser, Reign of Terror, Dream Fighter

Matthew Vienneau
Masters Quarterfinalist ($5,500)
Age 24
Toronto, Ontario, Canada
Preliminaries: Red/blue/green
Key Cards: Grinning Totem, Ray of Command, Goblin Scouts, counterspells
Finals: Red/green/blue/black
Key Cards: Phyrexian Purge, Ray of Command, Incinerate, Superior Numbers

tle failed to read the Panther card closely enough and missed its "sacrifice to destroy creature blocking it" ability; otherwise, he would have put them in his deck to begin with.

It worked. Mess-Kastle won and went on to face Germany's Frank Adler in the Masters division, while Louis Beryl played Aaron Souders in the Junior finals.

The Juniors match ended fairly quickly: both players had fast decks with red X-spells, but Beryl drew no Plains in the third duel; leaving him stuck with a handful of white spells, and drew a huge number of lands and almost no spells in the fourth duel. These unfortunate turns of events allowed Souders (who had started the duel with a severe mana shortage) to come back to win.

On the Masters side, the matches went much more slowly. Adler won the first in a long, very close battle. "I won the first game with the Torch trick," explains Adler. "Holding Kaervek's Torch the whole game in my hand from the very beginning, just counting up mana and holding off all his big creatures. That was the plan."

Mess-Kastle came back to win the second, but felt the need to sideboard to throw Adler off balance. He took out his green again and brought in Pacifism, four white creatures, including the Benevolent Unicorn, and five Plains. It didn't help; Adler won the third game easily.

For the fourth duel, Mess-Kastle switched again, this time to the black/blue/red configuration which had won him the semi-finals. And, for a while, it looked like Mess-Kastle had a chance, until Adler got out his Reckless Embermage and cast Soar on it, giving it a +1 toughness bonus. Now that it could poke for two points a turn without dying, the Embermage was relentless. A few turns of poking and the game was over. Riding the strengths of his red and blue deck, Adler had won handily, returning to Germany with $26,000 in his pocket.

Beth Moursund is a veritable fountainhead of Magic knowledge. You can see her spout off every month in InQuest's "Stumpers" department.

the winning deck

Frank Adler is in charge of a programming group at an insurance company in Germany. That may be where he got his careful, methodical approach to building decks. We asked him to describe his deck construction technique for us at the Pro Tour finals.

"I got all the cards and I sorted them out by the colors; that's what every player does. And then I go to each color, and sorted out the ones that I think are very good cards, the bad cards, and the ones you take to fill up the deck. Then I see where are my favorite cards from Friday and try to use those colors. I have to rearrange them because I wanted blue in it, not black, at the end.

"I'm always looking for some cards that swing the game in my favor. Savage Twister is a very good card…or the Sandbar Crocodile, because it's so big that an opponent has a lot of difficulty stopping it. And Soar, the blue enchantment that gives flying to any creature. Some direct red, that's always good.

"Finally, I look for hard defenses, because most of the time in sealed deck you have to hold your opponent off so long until you get your cards to swing the game in your favor."

BLUE

CREATURES
1 Bay Falcon
1 Merfolk Raiders
1 Sandbar Crocodile
1 Teferi's Drake

SPELLS
1 Power Sink
1 Reality Ripple
1 Soar
1 Tidal Wave

1 Savage Twister

GREEN

CREATURES
1 Locust Swarm
1 Quirion Elves
1 Stalking Tiger

SPELLS
1 Regeneration
1 Tropical Storm
1 Unyaro Bee Sting

RED

CREATURES
1 Blistering Barrier
2 Ekundu Cyclops
1 Pyric Salamander
1 Reckless Embermage

SPELLS
1 Aleatory
1 Builder's Bane
1 Kaervek's Torch
1 Lightning Reflexes

LAND
6 Forest
5 Island
6 Mountain
1 Teferi's Isle

the top decks

Terry Borer
Masters Quarterfinalist ($5,500)
Age 19
North York, Ontario, Canada
Preliminaries: Black/green/red
Key Cards: Lots of mid-sized creatures
Finals: White/black/blue
Key Cards: Pacifism, Jabari's Influence, Urborg Panther

Chris Pikula
Masters Quarterfinalist ($5,500)
Age 21
Ithaca, NY
Preliminaries: Red/green/blue
Key Cards: Hammer of Bogarden, Kaervek's Torch, Vaporous Djinn, counterspells
Finals: White/red/blue
Key Cards: Volcanic Geyser, Thirst, lots of good creatures

Michael Long
Masters Quarterfinalist ($5,500)
Age 21
Centreville, VA
Preliminaries: Red/black/white
Key Cards: Pacifism, Drain Life, Dark Banishing, lots of creatures
Finals: Black/blue/white/red
Key Cards: Ray of Command, Bone Harvest, Amulet of Unmaking, counterspells

Aaron Souders
Junior Champion ($8,400 scholarship)
Age 18
Elburn, IL
Preliminaries: Red/black/white
Key Cards: Mtenda Griffin, two other griffins, lots of flankers
Finals: Red/black/blue
Key Cards: Kaervek's Torch, Volcanic Geyser, Incinerate, Thirst

Louis Beryl
Junior Finalist ($5,000 scholarship)
Age 15
Palm Beach Gardens, FL
Preliminaries: Black/green/red
Key Cards: Dwarven Nomad, Canopy Dragon, lots of small creatures
Finals: White/red/black
Key Cards: Kaervek's Torch, Amber Prison, Kaervek's Purge

Check this. It kicks off with a new generation of versatile programs that change identity on the fly. Icebreakers that can pull a quick switch and become entirely different weapons at your discretion. Walls that can slap up code gate routines. Wallbreakers that can drop a sentry flat. The first limited-edition expansion set for **Netrunner** blows into stores this fall. Fifteen-card booster packs filled with the latest street-tech and industrial countermeasures. New innovations will put an edge on your game.

Are you getting this, Wilson? *Proteus* is out there. You better run.

15-card booster packs (mixed Corp and Runner): $2.95 MSRP / Wizards of the Coast® Customer Service: (206) 624-0933

Check out *Webrunner II, The Forbidden Code* online contest at http://www.wizards.com

©1996 Wizards of the Coast, Inc Produced by Wizards of the Coast, Inc. under license from R Talsorian Games WIZARDS OF THE COAST and *Proteus* are trademarks of WotC
Netrunner is a trademark of RTG. Illustration by Mark Tedin.

[on deck]

Mirage

Coming off the heels of *Alliances*, one of *Magic*'s best expansions to date, could *Mirage* live up to everyones expectations? Flanking, Phasing...we've seen new rules before. Would they be cool additions like Summon Legends, or would they be busts like Rampage and Snow-covered lands? What about power cards? With so many great cards in *Alliances*, would there be anything left over for *Mirage?*

[the box]

mirage

Game: *Magic: The Gathering*
Publisher: Wizards of the Coast
Designers: Bill Rose, Joel Mick, Charlie Catino, Don Felice, Howard Kahlenberg and Elliott Siegel
Genre: Fantasy
Release: October 1996
Set Size: 350 cards
Packaging: 60-card starter decks; 15-card booster packs
Suggested Retail: $8.95 per starter; $2.95 per booster

All questions were answered when *Mirage* started to creep into the public after Pro Tour IV in Atlanta, and the results were very positive.

As far as new rules go, Flanking and Phasing are winners. Flanking may be one of the most powerful creature abilities yet, and Phasing adds a whole new element to the game.

Cadaverous Bloom
Enchantment
Choose a card in your hand and remove it from the game. Add 2 or 4 to your mana pool. Pay this ability as a mana source.
"It's filthy work, planting them."
—Kimbo, Shadow Guildmage

For tourney players, *Mirage* has plenty of new toys that can fit into existing decks, such as Amber Prison, Stupor, Choking Sands and Mystical Tutor. And, for players who want to give something new a try, cards like Celestial Dawn, Natural Balance and Grinning Totem are sure to put a wrinkle in the tournament scene.

But *Mirage's* biggest strength is its impact on casual play...you know, those of us who play for fun. Among the cool things this set offers are: a dragon or two for every color, gold spells using opposing colors, cards that can do more than one thing (like the charms) and a host of new theme deck possibilities (like Golems and Griffins).

As a standalone set, *Mirage* is better than WotC's first attempt. *Ice Age* suffered from a lack of worthwhile uncommon cards and too many useless rares. While *Mirage* still has its share of useless cards, the good cards are scattered well among the rarity levels, and there are few cards that downright suck.

Then there's the artwork. Many fans were worried that the art would suffer when several of *Magic*'s more prominent artists jumped ship, but the result was the opposite. The artwork in *Mirage* is by far the best of any *Magic* expansion so far.

Overall, *Mirage* is a winner. It doesn't boast as many power cards as *Alliances*, but there's more to the game than just winning. With each expansion, it gets harder and harder to keep the game fresh and new, but that's exactly what *Mirage* manges to do.

—Jeff Hannes

[on deck]

Proteus

Okay, there's like this netrunner and he finds this old datafort, and it's filled with all these ancient programs and stuff. You know, like artifacts. And guess what? They're from a *long-forgotten war!*

Yeah, yeah, yeah. I've been playing CCGs long enough to remember *Antiquities*. Wizards of the Coast should be ashamed of itself for rehashing that tired story. Especially since *Proteus*, the first expansion set for *Netrunner*, is all about change.

What sort of changes? To start, there are the programs which change their natures. Morphing Tool is an icebreaker which can target code gates, sentries or walls depending on the runner's whim. Galatea is a wall...unless the corporation wants it to be a code gate. And the corp can alter the number of subroutines on Riddler every time the runner encounters it.

[the box]

proteus

Game: *Netrunner*
Publisher: Wizards of the Coast
Genre: Cyberpunk
Designers: Richard Garfield, Jim Lin and Tom Wylie
Set Size: 154 cards
Release: September 1996
Packaging: 15-card booster packs
Suggested Retail: $2.95 per booster pack

More important, though, are the changes made to the nature of the game by *Proteus* cards. The set puts two new weapons in the hands of the runner: hidden resources, which are played face down and revealed only when necessary, and "bad publicity" counters. The hidden resources are invaluable; the best is Airport Locker, which allows a runner to search his stack for a program and install it in the middle of a run! Bad publicity works like poison does in Magic; give the corporation seven BP counters and the runner wins. Although it's very difficult to make a BP deck work, the idea of an intrepid hacker bringing Arasaka to its knees is intriguing.

Things are no less interesting on the corporate side. Now, certain pieces of ice (like Snowbank and Marionette) give you bits when you rez them. There are agendas that protect themselves, even when they're not installed: Marked Accounts gives the nosy runner a tag (no trace required) while Fetal AI serves up net damage. Antibody nodes act like viruses for the runner, giving counters that further harass and hinder him.

But, best of all, there's World Domination. It's an agenda that costs 12 for the corp to score but, when it does, it gives seven agenda points. That spells "game over" in one fell swoop.

If you play *Netrunner*, you'll definitely want to pick up a few boosters of *Proteus*. If you're a serious player, consider a box—it's that important, and that cool. But if I see *Legends of the Net*, I'm gonna scream...

—Jason Schneiderman

Mirage & Netrunner are registered trademarks of Wizards of the Coast

Card Stock

Tracking trends in the card game market

MAGIC EXCITEMENT APPROACHES ALL-TIME HIGH

By Dan Albaugh

Grinning Totem
Artifact
2, Sacrifice Grinning Totem: Search target opponent's library for any card and put it face up in front of you. That player shuffles his or her library afterwards. You may play the card as though it were in your hand. If you do not play the card by the beginning of your next upkeep, put it into its owner's graveyard.

■ *Mirage*'s most valuable card?

■ *OverPower* is picking up steam with DC characters added to the lineup.

In the first half of 1996, gaming shops were faced with a sluggish *Magic: The Gathering* market. In order to generate income, many retailers were forced to hold 50-percent-off sales. Some store owners claimed that interest in *Magic* was at a record low.

What a difference a couple of months and two new expansions can make! The same retailers who were singing the blues earlier are now proclaiming that the excitement regarding *Magic* may be near an all-time high. The recent surge of enthusiasm kicked into gear this past June when gamers realized that *Alliances* was of limited production and included a ton of great cards.

Booster packs and single-card sales have continued to range between steady and spectacular. Most single-card prices remain unchanged from last month. Notable exceptions are Ivory Gargoyle and Keeper of Tresserhorn, which have experienced modest increases in value. Helm of Obedience, tagged as overrated by gaming experts, continues to inch downward in price.

Several retailers have also observed an increase in the sales of *Ice Age* cards. After Wizards of the Coast announced that *Ice Age* was no longer being printed, many gamers made purchases, believing that prices would never be lower than at this time. However, expect prices to drop once *Ice Age*, along with the much-maligned *Fallen Empires*, exits the Type II tournament scene in January.

Mirage Makes the Scene

Unlike *Alliances*, which arrived without much fanfare after generating few pre-sells, *Mirage* is creating plenty of interest. According to early retailer reports, high-demand cards from *Mirage* include Grinning Totem, Celestial Dawn, Hammer of Bogardan, Final Fortune and Crimson Hellkite. Fifteen-card booster packs have a suggested retail price of $2.95. Initial pricing for single cards found in the 350-card set is included in this issue's "*InQuest* Price Guide."

The new excitement over *Mirage* has certainly been heightened by "phasing" and "flanking," two special abilities that gamers are eagerly learning to master. And with each new expansion, it seems that certain cards from previous sets that were once undesirable are now in demand. Gamers invariably come up with new combinations that suddenly make a particular card very popular. (See the fan-combo-of-the-month on pg. 108 for an idea of what we mean.)

DC Slower Than Marvel

When *Marvel OverPower* was released in the summer of 1995, sales were fast-paced. However, store reports give evidence that sales of *DC OverPower* in the first month of its release have not matched the numbers that were posted by *Marvel*. Says Avrom Oliver of Adventures in Comics and Games of Carmichael, Calif., "I'm not surprised at all. The DC characters are just not as popular as those from Marvel." Oliver contends that the bulk of his customers for the *OverPower* games are collectors and that the CCG has no appeal to sophisticated gamers.

Bill Frantz of Books Galore in Erie, Pa. disagrees. "*DC OverPower* isn't overly simplistic. I play the game regularly and I know that an effort has to made to learn the strategies. So what if it isn't as complicated as *Magic*? That doesn't mean it can't be fun to play!" Many of Frantz's *OverPower* customers are gamers who appreciate the fact that the *DC* and *Marvel* versions are fully compatible. "Sometimes *DC* whips *Marvel*'s butt and sometimes the reverse is true," says Frantz.

The mass marketing of *OverPower* by Fleer/SkyBox also has a large effect on small gaming shops, especially those who do a lot of business through mail order. Few customers will special order products they can find significantly cheaper at major retail outlets like Wal-mart and Toys "R" Us. It becomes a battle the shops just can't win.

Top 5 Hottest CCGs

1. *Magic: The Gathering* (WotC)

Mirage is providing some great cards at affordable prices. Grinning Totem and Celestial Dawn are two of the higher-priced cards.

2. *Star Wars CCG* (Decipher)

In the *A New Hope* expansion, Greedo and Wedge Antilles have gone up in value while Brainiac experiences a slight decrease.

3. *DC OverPower* (Fleer/SkyBox)

At least one shop reported that 100% of their *DC OverPower* sales were to collectors. The hero cards for Batman and Superman are quite popular.

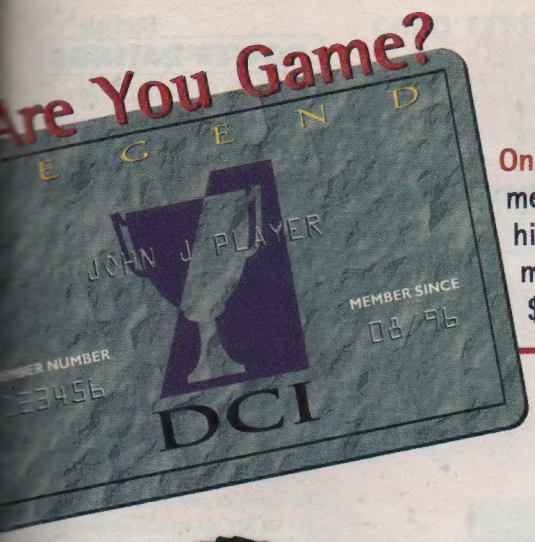
4. *Middle-earth: The Wizards* (ICE)

The few mail-order retailers that are selling *Middle-earth* singles are doing just fine. *Dark Minions*, the second expansion, will keep the ball rolling.

5. *Star Trek : The Card Game* (Fleer/SkyBox)

Trekkies are big buyers of this CCG that features photos from the first season (1966) of the original television series.

GET RANKED



Only Duelists' Convocation International™ (DCI) members can get ranked! The more you win, the higher your rating: As a top-ranked DCI member, you could land a spot on the $1,000,000 **Magic: The Gathering®** Pro Tour™!

DCI MEMBERSHIP

MANA MEMBERSHIP is free at all sanctioned tournaments for competitors who just want to get ranked.

LEGEND MEMBERSHIP gives you more!

1996 benefits:

- DCI membership card . . . exclusive to Legend members (shown here)
- Two playable **Magic: The Gathering** cards, featuring unique art available *only* to Legend members (shown here)
- A collectable **Magic: The Gathering** playing card deck (shown here)
- One Italian *Legends*™ booster pack!
- Special subscription rates for *The Duelist*™—Wizards of the Coast's official trading card game magazine ($14.95 for six issues)

For credit card orders and membership renewals call **1-800-324-6496**
24 hours a day, 7 days a week.
Visa, MasterCard, Discover

For DCI customer service call **(206) 204-8032.**

join!

Complete this form and send with payment to:

Duelists' Convocation International
Wizards of the Coast
P.O. Box 707
Renton, WA 98057-0707

Name: _____
Address: _____
City: _____ State: _____ Zip Code: _____
Country: _____ Phone #: _____
Date of birth: _____ Email: _____
Signature: _____

❑ Legend membership ($12) ❑ Six issues ($14.95) Special subscription rate to *The Duelist*, exclusive to DCI Legend members

PAYMENT METHOD: ❑ Check enclosed *(Payable to Wizards of the Coast)* ❑ Visa ❑ MasterCard ❑ Discover

Account number: _____ **Expiration date:** _____ **Signature on card:** _____

Canadian orders: Legend membership—$16.00; six issues of *The Duelist*—$22.95. Send U.S. funds only. Please allow 3–4 weeks for shipping and handling. Allow 6–12 weeks for delivery of your first issue of *The Duelist*. Foreign orders contact Wizards of the Coast, Belgium. Phone: +32-(0)14-44-30-40 or Internet: custserv@wizards.be.

WIZARDS OF THE COAST and Magic: The Gathering are registered trademarks of Wizards of the Coast, Inc. DUELISTS' CONVOCATION INTERNATIONAL is a trademark of Wizards of the Coast, Inc. ©1996 Wizards of the Coast, Inc. All rights reserved.

No Apologies.

The final evolution of war has come to trading card gaming. The BATTLETECH® TCG is the game of devastating war-machines and tactical combat. Send in 'Mechs® to hammer enemy fortifications. Marshall your forces to ensure final victory. The future belongs to BATTLETECH® TCG. Everything else is history.

Find out more about BattleTech at www.wizards.com

Wizards OF THE COAST

FASA CORPORATION

60-card starter decks: $8.95 / 15-card booster packs: $2.95
Wizards of the Coast® Customer Service: (206) 624-0933.

BattleTech® and 'Mech® are registered trademarks of FASA Corporation. The BattleTech® universe is owned by FASA Corporation and used under license.
WIZARDS OF THE COAST is a registered trademark of Wizards of the Coast, Inc. Illus. by Carl Critchlow. ©1996 Wizards of the Coast, Inc.